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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

LISTENING AND SPEAKING: IMMIGRANT VIEWS OF ADULT EDUCATION IN EDMONTON

by

Laura E. Ho

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

DEPARTMENT OF SECONDARY EDUCATION

Edmonton, Alberta

Fall, 1993

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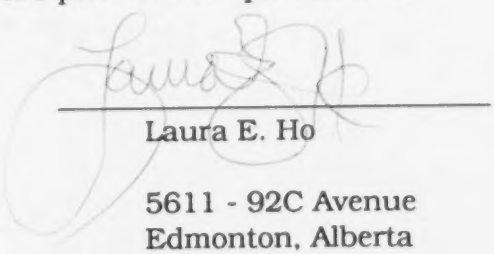

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THE UNDERSIGNED CERTIFY THAT THEY HAVE READ, AND RECOMMEND TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH FOR ACCEPTANCE, A THESIS ENTITLED **LISTENING AND SPEAKING: IMMIGRANT VIEWS OF ADULT EDUCATION IN EDMONTON** IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY.

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Date: July 29/93

Dedication

For Wilfred and Nicholas, whose love and support made this dissertation possible.

Abstract

Several factors contribute to a need for increased understanding of the experience of immigrants in Canadian adult education. With significant and planned increases to immigration in response to an aging population and low birth rate, more newcomers, predominantly of working age, are arriving in this country each year. Recent labour market studies point to an increasing need for skilled workers if Canada is to meet the challenges of global competition. Underpinning these economic goals, however, is the more substantive problem of ensuring social cohesion within an increasingly culturally diverse Canadian community. Education should be elemental to the ongoing transformation of Canada's social fabric.

With the exception of ESL classes, much of current adult education programming has tended to exclude immigrants. For this reason, the dissertation focusses beyond a traditional understanding of that subject, highlighting the clientele of the Language and Vocational Assessment Service (LVA) of Catholic Social Services in Edmonton. It begins from the point of view of a counsellor, informed by government statistical reports and daily listening to the stories of immigrants, and introduces, then counterworks two very different views of immigrant experience: a statistical characterization of the LVA population and narrative portraits of four clients. The dynamics of the relationship between those two positions and that of the teacher/counsellor is explored in a conversation in which all participants strive to share both goals and ideas.

The investigation describes the need for a contextual treatment of language within the broad framework of adult education, enabling immigrants, regardless of their background in an official language, to gain access to meaningful education. A conceptual framework for thinking about education in multilingual settings is presented. The study also suggests that the variety of experience of people in our society, immigrant and Canadian-born, should become a resource to both learners and teachers, promoting appreciation of difference, recognition of competence. More broadly, however, the dissertation also has implications for a view of education which seeks to recognize the centrality of human interdependence in the process of economic and social change.

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Chapter 1 – Introduction

Most books about immigrants and education that contain the words *listening and speaking* in their titles are textbooks. They are intended to instruct newcomers in second language skills that will enable them to communicate more effectively with others. In the skill development context, though, listening and speaking are often promoted for passive purposes — learning to understand others and to speak in response to what you hear. Seldom are immigrants asked to speak about their place in the school or in Canada. Less frequently are those opinions listened to.

This work takes as its subject immigrant views about their experiences in education. At a time in Canadian history when non-English speaking immigrants and immigration have become an easy target for politicians who wish to show their commitment to fiscal restraint, it would be informative to know what immigrants are saying about adapting to this country and, in particular, how education has or could contribute to their experience. There are many questions tied up in such an undertaking, but, for the most part, they have not been pursued. Instead, neat conclusions about the problems of immigrants dot the landscape:

"If they learn English, they will learn to fit in";

"They should go to work as soon as possible to pay back what this country has invested in them";

"The government shouldn't give them any assistance. I never got any and look where I am today!"; or my personal favourite

"We should stop immigration completely. Those people just come here and take our jobs."

There have been government reports to demonstrate the economic benefits of immigration to Canada (Canada. Employment and Immigration, 1989; Canada. Employment and Immigration, 1986). There have been reports about immigrants and integration (Canada. Employment and Immigration, 1990; Canada. Employment and Immigration Advisory Council, 1991). There have been policy documents (Canada. House of Commons, 1988; Government of Alberta, 1990). Still, Canadians have heard little from the people whose needs and characteristics have been so well documented.

I offer this work in the hope that it will encourage dialogue among people, immigrants and Canadian-born alike. This is a somewhat rambling dissertation, one that begins over a desk set in a small interview room in a counselling programme of Catholic Social Services in Edmonton, Alberta. The study

incorporates two methodological dynamics — a statistical study and a narrative study — in an attempt to convey the complexity which characterizes this problem. You may find yourself, as I did, jolted from one section to the next, struggling to make connections between the meaning of figures and the subtle power of stories. The detour is intentional. In the untidy circumstances of the community, teachers and counsellors must try to find ways to justify the system to immigrants, immigrants to the system.

I have worked very hard to make the journey interesting for a variety of readers. The style is intentionally accessible so that most parts of the research are available to researchers, teachers and the general public, including immigrants. As well, I hope that you will enjoy what you read here. Don't be afraid to look out the windows as this small world approaches. You are invited to participate.

Perspective of the Researcher

This dissertation does not proceed from a primary goal of positivistic objectivity, that is, from a position which strives for a dispassionate understanding of a question. I wish to acknowledge my own background and experience as an incentive for research. I worked as an ESL teacher in Edmonton for many years, becoming increasingly interested in the situation of immigrant learners in Canadian schools. Later, I was the Director of the ESL Resource Centre at the Alberta Vocational Centre in Edmonton. In that position, I worked with many learners outside of schools, providing training for volunteers, support for independent learners, counselling for many who wished to study. In the meantime, I also engaged in sociopolitical work with the Alberta Teachers of English as a Second Language (ATESL) and with TESL Canada. In 1985, I helped to establish the Language and Vocational Assessment Service at Catholic Social Services where this study was conducted.

In spite of my Chinese surname, my own cultural background is Canadian, of British extraction. It is my husband who is Chinese Canadian. Certainly my marriage to an immigrant has affected how I experience other newcomers, but I do not think it is the only factor in choosing to study the experience of adult immigrants as learners. Early experiences in a military family taught me some things about moving, adjusting and meeting new people. At least they taught me to be interested in other people.

Undoubtedly these factors affect my point of view about the subject I am studying. I am not so sure, however, that my experience needs to be regarded as a liability. Libraries are filled with studies by people trained in statistics, but with little familiarity in the experience of the people they are studying. The perspective

which has led to this state of affairs — that methodological skill is primary to a thoughtful understanding of the people and issues concerned — reveals another kind of bias. My intent is not to compare, rate or belittle any particular view, but rather to raise the issue of bias as it pertains to research concerning immigrants generally. Given the problems of awareness and appreciation of cultural diversity which continue to emerge in Canada, perhaps more varied perspectives in representing culture and experience are called for.

Delimitations

1. The study concerns the clientele of the Language and Vocational Assessment Service (LVA), a programme of Catholic Social Services in Edmonton. Counselling and assessment are provided by the programme to adult immigrants, regardless of religious background.
2. Participants:
   a) The statistical component of the study included information describing 5002 immigrants and refugees from a variety of cultural and linguistic groups.
   b) The narrative component of the study involves four former clients of the LVA programme. These four individuals are not intended to represent, demographically or experientially, the whole spectrum of experience of clients of the service. Rather, they relate four stories of individuals who have left their countries and come to Canada.
   c) Additional information was provided through interviews with programme officials, former administrative workers and counsellors.
3. Time Period:
   a) The statistical study incorporates records from 1987 to 1992. The 1987 records, however, began only at the tail end of that year (15 records) and have been excluded from the study for purposes of comparison.
   b) The stories were documented beginning in the spring of 1992 and were completed in January, 1993.

Limitations

1. The Language and Vocational Assessment Service serves newcomers in the Edmonton area. Generalization of findings to other communities will depend on immigrant demographics for those areas plus the level of mainstream community response to their needs.

2. The LVA population is not truly representative of the entire immigrant/refugee group in Edmonton. Some groups (ie. refugees) are over-represented, others participate very little.
3. The study depends on the accuracy of counsellors documenting client records, plus the cooperation of data entry staff in making sure they are complete.

Assumptions

The study concerns the subject of immigrants and adult education, and takes place in an immigrant settlement agency. It is assumed that clients who present themselves for assessment of their mother tongue, English and vocational histories, are hoping to be referred to appropriate adult education programmes. It is also assumed that the stories shared with me are true or believed to be true.

Definitions

Academic Upgrading – Adult Basic Education or high school level classes for adult learners.

Catholic Social Services (CSS) – A social service agency, sponsored by the Catholic Community, in Edmonton. CSS provides a wide range of social programming in addition to services for immigrants and refugees, including personal and family counselling, residential care for the disabled, youth work, an AIDS hospice and adoption assistance.

English as a Second Language (ESL) – English for non-native speakers of English, the term is usually applied when English is taught to immigrants as the language of the country's cultural majority. Immigrant learners are sometimes called ESL learners, and in other bodies of literature may be referred to as limited English proficiency (LEP) or non-native speakers (NNS). ESL is distinguished from EFL (English as a Foreign Language), which describes the teaching of English in locales where English is not a majority language.

Immigrant – Immigrants are people who migrate to Canada from other countries. The term is problematic because it includes many classes for admission, including several classes of refugees, family class, assisted relative, independent, domestic, and business immigrants. Many refugees call themselves immigrants. Also, problems relating to immigration may persist even after an immigrant has taken Canadian citizenship.

Language and Vocational Assessment Service (LVA) – A programme of Catholic Social Services Immigration Services, LVA receives its funding from Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development. The programme offers

assessment of mother tongue, English language and vocational skills plus counselling and referral to community schools and agencies.

Mainstream – Agencies, schools, services and resources which are available to the general public.

Regular programme – Regular classes that are offered to the general public and have no special provision for ESL assistance.

Social Environment – The totality of human interactions, particularly as they relate to and within a given geographical and natural space. The substance of political, economic, technological and educational endeavours extends from recognition of qualities and possibilities of the social environment. I am endebted to social theorist Murray Bookchin (1982) for his analysis of the interaction between the social and the natural, but have chosen not to use his term, *ecology*, here because it brings into focus the study of the problem (ecology) rather than the character of the place (environment). My choice of the word *environment* is not intended to align the work of this dissertation with the mechanistic view of nature Bookchin has critiqued.

Questions

The goal of this dissertation is to investigate the tension between the questions:

1. **How do adult immigrants experience adult education? (actuality)**

   and

2. **How do adult immigrants imagine adult education which allows/encourages their involvement? (possibility)**

Chapter 2 – Review of the Literature

The education of adult immigrants is not a new concern for Canadians. Throughout our history, education has been involved in most attempts to increase communications and commerce between groups, and to enable governance. In the earliest days of colonization, there were educational aspects in the relationship between aboriginal peoples and recent British and French arrivals. Local peoples instructed the newcomers in the ways of the woods, construction of canoes, indigenous plants and animals, dealing with the winter. In return, the Europeans introduced their style of education together with their religions. Such education occupied a minor place in political reckonings, however far-reaching its consequences for aboriginal peoples, compared with the colonial governments' more overt political and economic goals of profit and empire.

Several centuries later, records made during the settlement of the first great wave of non-British, non-French migrants initiated by Clifford Sifton, Canada's first Minister of the Interior, in 1905, revealed the enormity of social change evident in an open land, sparsely settled by a British and French colonial majorities. Writing in 1919, Alfred Fitzpatrick, former missionary and founder of Frontier College observed that

> the influx of non-English-speaking peoples into Canada is very large in proportion to the population. We allow new-comers to live in settlements on the prairies, or, what is worse, to form colonies in large urban and industrial centres. There, their racial characteristics are continued and encouraged by native societies and leagues, forming unassimilated groups, which are a menace to Canadian unity (p.1).

Fitzpatrick, along with other writers of his time (Anderson, 1918; Woodsworth, 1909) did speak about education. Indeed, education was viewed instrumentally, as a means to Canadianize the "foreigners", to homogenize a racially and linguistically diverse population, "'increase production' and develop 'material resources'" (Anderson, 1918, p.7).

Since that early era of intense population growth, Canada has matured into the industrial age, evolving from a society which was primarily agricultural to one that is increasingly technological and service-oriented. Throughout this period of modernization, immigration levels have increased and decreased in keeping with the needs of the economy and fluctuating levels of emigration, as an ongoing source of labour for the modern workforce. As Canada nears the end of the twentieth century, however, both the pressures affecting the character of our immigration and

our ideas about work have changed. The goal of recruiting skilled labour has begun to shift in importance as a rationale for immigration as Canadians, like people in many economically-advantaged countries, ponder the dilemma of fertility and mortality (Canada. Health & Welfare, 1987; Canada. Employment & Immigration, 1987), the very shape of the nation's future. The implications of such a fundamental shift in the logic of social and economic planning, however, has so far largely escaped discussion.

It is the character of this changing Canadian context which is the location for my examination of immigrant experience. The shape of the context itself has been the subject of debate, the Canadian Constitutional hearings, where citizens wrestled simultaneously with questions of national identity and significant demographic and technological change. Throughout the hearings, it became increasingly clear that the goal of a shared and singular vision of Canada may itself be a problem. As the visions of politicians from physical regions — Ottawa and the provinces — collided with the equally disparate aspirations of Quebecois and First Nations leaders, many other Canadians were simply wondering about their jobs and the quality of their lives.

We live in a time when "distinct" may come to refer less to a cohesive national identity than one that is more regional or cultural, as in the case of native peoples and other minorities, when the inclusion of new people as immigrants is analyzed and valued by government, separately from, and in direct contradiction with the issues of population, primarily for its economic impact rather than its broader sociocultural effect. The very concept of "immigrant", however, inheres tensions within and between individuals and their societies which are at once physical, emotional, and social, as well as economic and political.

Consider the large scale effects of immigration on life in Canada. Diffused across the whole expanse of Canadian endeavour, issues of identity and diversity within the population are diluted into a variety of solutions — employment, health, environment, women's issues, banking, housing, and so on — rendering them marginal, peripheral to most matters of importance. It is precisely for this reason that issues relating to minorities in the population have tended to be overlooked in the treatment of broad political, social and economic questions. Instead, the study of minority issues has evolved into several distinct fields, each one a subject of intense focus and study — multiculturalism (the study of strategies for the expression and accommodation of culture in diverse societies), race relations (the study of racism and means to improve relations among peoples of various racial groups), native studies (the study of the specific cultural characteristics and contributions of aboriginal peoples), intercultural education (education for effective

intercultural communication [often for business or government]), English as a second language or ESL (the provision of English language instruction for immigrants), English as a foreign language or EFL (the provision of English language instruction in non-English-speaking countries), ethnic studies (the study of ethnic relations and the contributions of various ethnic groups to society), cross-cultural psychology (the comparative study of behaviour in various cultural communities) — each one objectifying and decontextualizing the experience of individuals from the broad social, economic and political context, rendering minority perspectives as special, marginal to the overall context of Canadian life.

Yet how could the broad spectrum of adult education enterprise respond to minority participation in society? How might Canadians address the subject of education when it concerns immigrants? Perhaps the very realization that we are living at this important juncture affords us a vantage point from which we may contemplate the problem of education generally, probing the rationales which have guided our treatment of immigrants throughout the period of industrial expansion. At the same time, such awareness may allow us to encounter the people we have become — immigrants, descendents of immigrants and aboriginal peoples — and consider the place of education as it enlarges the possibilities of our life together, in this place.

This exploration takes place within the context of societal and educational change. Many words have been introduced into the English language to describe the change we are now experiencing, including evolution (Bookchin, 1988), shift (Kuhn, 1970), transformation (Capra, 1983; Freire, 1989; Ferguson, 1980; Berman, 1988; Schumacher, 1989), empowerment (Giroux, 1992), revolution (Hoffer, 1951; King & Schneider, 1991; McLuhan, 1970), development (World Commission on Environment & Development, 1987; Taylor, 1991), change (Henderson, 1988; I Ching, [Bollingen Edition] 1987). Each of these words is applied to a specific aspect of change, be it scientific, social, personal, economic. Yet the experience of change by ordinary people is not so specific. As they are bombarded by news about political unrest in Europe, Asia, Africa and the Caribbean; economic decline and increasing unemployment in Canada; technological innovation after innovation in some nameless laboratory, somewhere; people respond intuitively that something is happening in the world. The feeling is like nausea, creeping slowly into the sensibilities until it finally affects the whole body, rendering us unable to act.

Yet the change we are experiencing is not as monolithic or as unmanageable as many may think. Change is, after all, a construction of the human mind. The human mind constructs thoughts in language and other symbolic forms (Vygotsky, 1978, p.28). Language, likewise, features as both central actor and object of talk in

discussions of immigrants in Canadian society. There is the issue of second language education, of minority language use, of "official language" use, as well as the bureaucratic language used in talking about immigrants and immigration. In speaking about adult immigrants, language is also much discussed as a vehicle for integrating newcomers (Thomas, 1990), as a requirement for admission (University of Alberta, 1993), as preparation for employment (Canada. Employment and Immigration Advisory Committee, 1991), as a vehicle for sharing culture with children (Bain and Yu, 1980), as an aspect of the social environment (Hymes, 1979).

If the issue of language and immigration is becoming overwhelming to you, and you are feeling a little nauseated, don't stop reading. In order to think about the issue of adult immigrants and education, we need to understand what questions to ask about it and, as intelligent beings, consider how it relates to our context as educators, citizens, human beings. We should also try to conserve energy and seek connections between this subject and some of the other issues which leave us with similar feelings of impotence (and possibly rage).

This literature review, then, will begin with the problem of second language and education, that is, with a global examination of the place and practice of English language teaching in a changing world, especially as it concerns the participation of immigrants in adult education in Canada. Specific implications for the Canadian context will then be considered, with attention to the character of the relationship between language and content in education. Finally, I will review the policies and practices of English language education in adult education as they follow and diverge from the evolutionary framework of multiculturalism in Canada, revealing the conceptual framework giving rise to this study.

The Practice of Language Teaching

As a field of educational specialization, English language teaching has increased exponentially during the course of the twentieth century. Economic, political and technological developments which have given rise to the industrial age have also led to greater and more sustained contact between peoples of the world, and language teaching has contributed to enabling such contacts. As well, movements of vast numbers of people through displacement and immigration, colonialism, the rise of international trade and the world-wide development of science and technology have created unparallelled demands for second and foreign language teaching to facilitate participation in expanded social, economic and technological spheres. Thus the expansion of English language teaching as a global phenomenon can be seen as more closely tied to objectives which are primarily political, economic and technical, than those which are purely linguistic or social.

The geographic, social and economic situation of learners across such a diverse field constitutes a challenge to those who would try to envisage language teaching as a unified field. The Canadian second language educator, Stern (1983), for example, opens his text, *Fundamental Concepts of Language Teaching*, with a chapter describing the characteristics of the field, identifying various dimensions of the language learning equation, and reviewing the range of expressions used to talk about language learning and learners. After clarifying a number of basic distinctions — L1/L2, second/foreign intranational/international — Stern examines terms relating to 'teaching' and 'learning'. As to the purposes for language teaching, Stern observes that

> the various reasons which prompt such second language learning are familiar enough and need not be gone into here. The principal question is what provision must be made by society to help these individuals to learn the second languages needed. The answer to this question is what is meant by second language teaching. (p. 20)

In making such a statement, Stern appeals to the reader's own "common sense" understanding of why language teaching takes place, distancing his formal characterization of the work of language teachers from any analysis of its sociopolitical aspects.

In his introduction to the *Context of Language Teaching*, American linguist J.C. Richards (1985) begins with an examination of language similar to that of Stern, but extends his treatment of the educational context to include policy questions:

> Any subject, whether English, history, music, or religion enters the educational domain when it is found to be relevant to the demands and needs of a society. It is the task of educational and curriculum planners to examine these needs to determine what goals may be relevant to its educational system. (p. 4)

Richards, unlike Stern, places the rationale for decision-making concerning language teaching within a societal framework, acknowledging its situation as relevant to the goals of the system which contains it. Once assigned to educational planners, however, responsibility for policy decisions regarding language teaching is again dismissed as peripheral to the central work of language teachers.

A number of writers have questioned the characterization of English language teaching as a neutral practice (Auerbach & Burgess, 1985; Judd, 1983; Phillipson, 1988; Cummins, 1989; Pierce, 1989; Pennycook, 1990), providing evidence from diverse areas to support their arguments. Minority educators Auerbach & Burgess (1985) are concerned with the situation of adult immigrants to North America; Canadian psychologist Cummins (1989) writes about the situation of

cultural minority children in American schools; critical theorist Phillipson (1988) considers the implications of English language teaching in the international community; Bronwyn Norton Pierce (1989) is concerned with political consequences of a populist movement for "People's English" in South Africa. That such divergent concerns can be seen to coalesce around the teaching of English demonstrates the pivotal role of language, or, more specifically, languages in the global community.

The Context of Education — Language and Content

If we consider the range of needs for content among adult immigrants (Ho, 1990; Hynes, 1987), including community participation and citizenship, vocational training, professional requalification, literacy learning and academic upgrading, the place of language becomes paramount. Canada Immigration acknowledges this when it states that "learning to communicate in one of Canada's official languages is a prerequisite for integration" (Canada. Immigration, 1990, p.14). The discourse of linguistic prerequisites set within an already officially bilingual framework, however, begins to disintegrate upon closer inspection. What is meant by linking language with integration in a cause and effect relationship? Does it convey an expectation that immigrants must first learn English or French before they can integrate? The Canadian government's position seems to be that integration of any description is unlikely without proficiency in an official language. They provide no documentation, however, to show how proficiency in an official language will facilitate this desired goal. The complex nature and variety of modes of integration remains unaddressed.

American sociologist R. Schermerhorn (1970) describes the potential outcomes of cultural contact almost as a continuum, ranging from completely enclosed (adjustment within group only) to completely assimilated (adjustment to majority values). He describes diversity in the possibilities of ways and destinations imagined and actualized by cultural communities. In research specifically relating to language and integration, sociolinguist John Schumann (1978) introduces a taxonomy of factors concerning the character of interaction between the individual and his or her environment which can affect acculturation and language learning outcomes. Possibilities for outcomes again represent a continuum from distance to proximity, this time with those in the target language group. It is when the texture of this possible diversity is not addressed, however, when homogeneity of education purpose is assumed and structured into programmes, that community responses to immigrant needs are not integrative, that is, responsive to the impact of change on all parts of the whole, but rather assimilationist, placing the onus for change on minority learners in order to maintain the standards and traditions of "the" educational system.

This observation, while pertaining to culture generally, should also be interpreted as it relates to language and content learning among immigrants. Actual educational issues among adult immigrants may be shown to relate more directly with content than with language. In her study for George Brown College in Toronto, researcher Maureen Hynes (1987) investigated minority community perceptions regarding the accessibility of programmes. She received considerable feedback suggesting "the need to revise existing College programmes and to develop new programmes in response to the education and training needs of diverse racial and cultural communities in Metro Toronto" (p.119). A variety of formats for provision of content were recommended, including employment-specific ESL and literacy training, and training programmes offered in bilingual or monolingual (mother tongue) settings.

In my own research (Ho, 1990), I assessed the issue of access to content (ie. education) by immigrants from the various perspectives of ESL programmers, adult education programmers, funders and settlement agency workers and found that a major impediment to documentation was the relative invisibility of the issues: in content-related matters, ESL programmers tended to defer to mainstream adult educators while the mainstream programmes relied on ESL as prerequisite to content. Language and content, as they pertain to immigrants, were indeed linked in the thinking of educators. Unfortunately, the perceived link was identified mainly as residing with immigrants themselves and not widely translated into facilitative linking or bridging programmes.

In comparing the findings of Hynes (1987) and Ho (1990), the vastness of the communication gap separating immigrants and the educational community becomes readily apparent. Immigrants want and need access to content via a variety of language approaches while governments and institutions tend to treat ESL as education for immigrants. Content is the realm of mainstream adult education (colleges, universities, technical schools), and is generally available to all on an equal opportunity basis. Notions such as "equal opportunity", however, fail under close inspection because they do not have the effect of equalizing access to education by marginalized groups (Deutsch, 1975; Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Porter, 1979).

Recognition of communicative diversity has tended to be interpreted educationally with the lowering of standards (Furnborough et al., 1982; Shor, 1986). This narrow view of language, however, has been strongly countered by researchers such as Jim Cummins (1986, p.21) who recommends "incorporation of minority languages and cultures into the school programme" as a strategy to promote minority integration and advancement. The integrative relationship of language and

learning has also been widely recognized (Mohan, 1986; Wong-Fillmore, 1982; Hynes, 1987; Hymes, 1980). There is a need to recognize that the demand for content learning among immigrants cannot be made contingent upon achieving proficiency in English, but that it occurs across the universe of community languages. While the integration of English and content learning may be a viable goal for many learners, for others, strategies for providing information about the community as well as skill development in the mother tongue will support adaptation to the community, and possibly increase learner confidence to learn some English.

Reconceptualizing the Project of Education

Many of these critiques of the treatment of language and education in society have successfully situated issues of educational practice directly within the economic and political structure of the social world as it has developed historically, locating the topic of language education within the interpretative framework of critical theory (Freire, 1989; Shor, 1986; Auerbach & Burgess, 1985). The assumptions of critical theory, of educationally enforced class distinctions, the oppressor and the oppressed, have also been criticized as inadequate for responding to the complexities of post-industrial society. Postmodern writers such as J.F. Lyotard (1984), Chantal Mouffe (1988), Thomas Popkewitz (1988), and Henry Giroux (1991) urge us instead to challenge the limitations of society as it is presented to us, and to have the courage to entertain eminently creative responses to real world problems.

But where does such creativity come from? The noted psychologist and educator Jerome Bruner (1986, p. 132) argues that it is in language, that "language not only transmits, it creates or constitutes knowledge or 'reality'". If, indeed, the ideologies and patterns of the present are unsuitable as models on which to construct a future with less destructive notions of economy, technology and society, we must begin to consider, challenge, and learn to play with the meanings of our institutions, including education. As Canadian society itself changes to increasingly challenge notions of homogeneity relative to culture, race and class, the shape of appropriate education for our people becomes problematic, an authentic unknown.

Given such a challenge, how are educators to conceive of their work? If an historical situation of language teaching is inadequate for the purposes of planning, how can teachers begin to think about what it is that they are doing/what it is that students are doing? Questions such as these call teachers to explore the inhabited world of language/learning (learning, learning language, learning second language). They proceed from an understanding that second language learning and teaching

take place in the fundamentally untidy context of society, a place where learner priorities are often shaped as much by economic goals as by any interest in the language of instruction, where some languages are perceived as barriers while others are lauded as tools.

Language Teaching Technology and the Social Environment

The twentieth century has been the stage for a proliferation of theories of language structure and teaching methodologies which share many features, hence a similar ideology, with more obviously mechanistic technologies. The treatment of language as behaviour which can be conditioned through application of suitable stimuli — the audiolingual method, Chomsky's conceptualization of a "language acquisition device" in humans (Chomsky, 1968), and accelerating development of theories of language based on computer models and their complementary teaching methodologies exemplify the treatment of human experience as parallel to (and ultimately comparable with) mechanical form and function.

Why talk about technique and methodology in a work about immigrants in adult education? To answer that question, I must provide the reader with the history of some of my own thinking. For some years I have been thinking about who immigrants are, why they are here. I knew that movements of people could be traced to wars, famines, political change. That is how my own family came to be in Canada several generations ago. Still, I wondered about the escalation of conflict in the modern world and how it related to other kinds of major conflicts, notably the one between technology and the natural environment. Is it only coincidence that these two phenomena — global political upheaval and environmental degradation — have grown up side by side? Intuitively, I sensed a connection but could not identify its location. What was it about our treatment of people that I found mirrored in issues of the natural environment?

It was in reading the *Ecology of Freedom*, by social theorist, Murray Bookchin (1988, p.33), that I began to know what I had already intuitively understood. "We phase into society as individuals in the same way that society, phasing out of nature comes into itself". Our cultures and communities draw their existence from the physical world. In the same way, humans depend on each other for survival. Bookchin traces the concurrent rise of the technical and technique in modern times, revealing their underlying unity of form and purpose, showing that it is the human mind that gives rise to social and political structure, creating, by extension, the culture of the machine. *The Ecology of Freedom* (1988) shows how the social has arisen from our interaction with the natural world, not separately from it. Yet our understanding of this vital connection has been all but lost.

> Even the political ideologies that hold sway in the modern world are different from those of antiquity, because they envisage man as the active master of nature who sets out to transform the whole of his social existence. (Barrett, 1978, p.202)

Can there be a role for educators to play at this critical juncture? In order to participate in such a process of change, educators must first develop a shared awareness of the impact of the technological within education, before they can address its effects, both on the human community and the world.

Technical thinking, as described by Bookchin (1988) and Barrett (1978) is evident in modern language teaching. Consider how closely the development of many teaching methodologies resembles the process of design in a technology such as the computer. A language teaching method is an application of a mental construct embodying a particular theory of language. It identifies appropriate strategies (programmes) and describes the shape of language teaching goals (outcomes). Similarly, a computer is a mechanical embodiment of engineering theory, a system for which methodologies (programmes) have been tailored to manage and share information. To participate in computer technology, one must have some introduction to the culture and language of the machine, and this is provided either through classroom instruction or through individual study.

Ecologically speaking, technologies such as the computer can be shown to have both positive and negative effects for, while computers help in fields like medicine with applications such as diagnostic imaging and life monitoring systems, the proliferation of waste paper, obsolete machinery and public collection of private information constitute more negative impacts of such technology. But what about the impact of "mental" technologies such as teaching methods? Do they also have an impact on the environment?

In fact, language and the technology of language education do affect the character of the global environment as they impact on colonialism, international trade, technology transfer. In programmes such the CIDA (the Canadian International Development Agency) China Programme, English and French language teaching have been an integral aspect of the transfer of technology since Chinese engineers, doctors and other technical experts need to be able to communicate with their Canadian counterparts. Canadian experts, in the main, have felt no need to reciprocate by learning some Chinese. Chinese experts who lack English or French would not be able to participate in technical upgrading sponsored by Canada. Similarly, we can trace the spread of English internationally to trade and business by English-speaking countries (eg. British colonies in India, Malta, Malaya and Hong

Kong), and to those same countries' military involvements (e.g., American military presence in the Philippines, South Korea, Germany and Iran).

The Context of Language Teaching

Just as language teaching has an effect on the character of the social and natural environment, so too does context shape the curriculum of language teaching. This statement emerges from an understanding that it is the actuality of international trade, immigration and adaptation, international education or science and technology which makes language teaching both possible and necessary. Curriculum is derived from the intents of policy makers, those who would make programmes available. Johnson (1989, p. 3) examines the decision-making framework of the language curriculum and describes policy makers as those responsible for programmes, whether they be directors of private language schools or government bureaucrats. It is the role of policy makers to translate the goals and values of their constituency into programmes.

Second language teaching is an aspect of education. This simple statement reflects an essential understanding of teachers and theorists (Mohan, 1986; Brinton, Snow & Wesche, 1989; Celce-Murcia, 1989; Benesch, 1988b) who study the relationship of second language and content learning. Canadian second language researcher Mohan (1986, p. 1) describes the relationship of language and content thus:

> A language is a system that relates what is being talked about (content) and the means used to talk about it (expression). Linguistic content is inseparable from linguistic expression.

In an integrated learning context, however, language does not act merely as a relating tool in the instrumental way that a spoon relates to soup. Language shapes content and content shapes language. One's language is one's voice (Hymes, 1983, p. 190). Culture is shared and expressed through language. Ideas are created through language.

In spite of the centrality of language to issues of culture, expression and social participation, however, much of the professional training of ESL or ELT professionals continues to project a narrow linguistic, psychological and methodological focus to the work. "It pays little attention to international relations, development studies, theories of culture or intercultural contact, or the politics or sociology of language or education" (Phillipson, 1988, p. 348). The context of use is estranged from classroom practice: its structure and function are often parodied through methodologies which disconnect communication from community.

What does the term "language and content" refer to? In fact, if we trace the etiology of the use of this term, there are probably several sources. Primary among them is the day to day work of thoughtful teachers who have always tried to make language learning a practical endeavour. In formal terms, however, the Language Across the Curriculum Movement (Barnes, Britton & Rosen, 1969, p.119) presented the concept of teaching language "in school, not as a subject to be taught and tested, but as an approach to learning." This work was given a great deal of emphasis in Britain's Bullock Report (1975), a report which did not focus on second language teaching, but rather the teaching of English in a variety of subject areas. Still, the Language Across the Curriculum concept was widely publicized and became popularized in school systems not only in Britain, but across North America and Australia in the early 1980s, at a time when teachers were receiving larger numbers of immigrant students into their classes. Emphasis on the importance of language across the curriculum in a multicultural Britain is also to be found in Torbe (1980).

In work among adults, Jupp and Hodlin of Britain's Industrial Language Training Service (ILT) introduced the concept of English in the workplace in *Industrial English* (1975), moving the location of language teaching into the context of use, the workplace. Jupp and Hodlin's work was adapted and expanded upon in many countries, including Canada. In later developments, the ILT examined the problems of training for cross-cultural communication in the workplace in a programme called *Crosstalk* (Gumperz, Jupp, Roberts, 1979). Another primary influence in the development of the concept of language and content was the work of the British sociolinguist M.A.K. Halliday (1977, 1985). Halliday, building on the language development work of Basil Bernstein (1971), introduced a way of looking at language in terms of how it is used, a functional analysis of language. He proposed looking at language semantically, in addition to the more traditional grammatical approach. He argued that, with a semantic focus, the learner

> can see what language is being used for, what the particular words and structures are being made to achieve, and in this way he builds up his own functionally-based language system. (p.84)

Halliday's work documents the range of features which describe language use, including function, variety and context.

Ideas about functions of language began to appear in the literature of second language teaching (Munby, 1978; Wilkins, 1976, van Ek, 1975), drawing heavily from research in linguistics (Stern, 1983, p. 178). Then, in 1980, Canadians Michael Canale and Merrill Swain published their landmark work on the

communicative approach to second language teaching, basing their ideas about the framework for assessing communicative competence on the development of competencies in three main areas: grammatical, sociolinguistic and strategic. The communicative approach incorporates the more traditional notion of grammatical proficiency as a mark of competence within a broader language learning goal of communication.

In spite of this, we are left to wonder about the role of humans as meaning-makers as opposed to language users. The term "language users" suggests that one uses language in the same way one might use a bicycle, as an instrument external to our existence. In the same way, Canale and Swain (1980) use "communicative competence" to talk about communication, disregarding the centrality of intention to genuine talk. Language is abstracted from the context of experience.

Communicative language teaching approaches successfully raised teacher awareness of the intrinsic functionality of language, but did not attempt to connect this functionality with real life experience. Many ESL teachers who diligently followed the Communicative Approach spent (and still spend) hours trying to reproduce (photocopy) the current state of the world via brochures, forms, and the inevitable roleplay exercises, in order to duplicate from it a "functional" environment for language learning. Subsequent approaches to the teaching of language and content have drawn a lot of attention among immigrant educators because student educational and employment goals are, more often than not, within the societal mainstream. In fact, the impetus for the reconciliation of language and content arises from a growing awareness within the field of language teaching of the need to exploit learners' communicative environments generally. Their conceptual reconciliation within adult education generally, however, remains remote.

In 1986, Bernard Mohan introduced *Language and Content*, drawing from both the educational and linguistic research already discussed above. Mohan (p.4) traces the development of policy for ESL teaching from 1) Learning by exposure to an English-speaking community; to 2) Isolated language teaching; citing the third stage of development as 3) Interactive language teaching — language teaching for and through the normal activities of the school and the English-speaking community. Mohan's work has been adopted internationally for its technique in combining language lessons with a content focus.

Yet how does Mohan characterize the environment of content and the language goals of learners? On this topic, he is somewhat vague, making statements such as

> Positive steps are taken to relate the language course to the communicative environment. (p.4)
>
> and
>
> Language for social relations is an immediate priority; a broader aim is to equip immigrants to live in the host country by means of their learning and adjustment at the place of work. (p.5)

While Mohan's work represents a tremendous step forward in its uniting of language and content teaching, it is still based on a characterization of community, narrowly focussed on workplace and school. The languages that learners bring to the community disappear from the landscape as vehicles of communication and of ideas. Learner goals become synonymous with the manipulation of language and content in English.

The theoretical connection of communicative language teaching with actual content, however, has vastly extended the possibilities of the Communicative Approach: it has moved language and learning from the segregation of the ESL classroom into the mainstream of education. At the same time, its conceptualization appears to rise in a variety of forms. Mohan (1986, p. 18) observes that "anguage learning in the communicative environment of the content classroom furthers the goals of language teaching by offering a context for language", highlighting the quality of the communicative environment made possible in a content-based class. Brinton, Snow & Wesche (1989, p. 2) note that "in a content-based approach, the activities of the language class are specific to the subject matter being taught, and are geared to stimulate students to think and learn through the use of the target language", allowing that content gives shape to the language curriculum. Chamot & O'Malley (1987, p. 228) adopt a more mechanistic view of the relationship between language and content, focussing on "English as a tool for learning subject matter" Benesch (1988a), in contrast, provides a more holistic view, acknowledging both language and learner experience as mediating factors in the educational process:

> ESL instruction in higher education should mediate between students' previous experiences with English and formal learning and the new linguistic, cognitive, social and cultural demands of studying content in an American college in the target language. (p. 2)

Conceptualizations of the relationship between language and content appear to represent a continuum from mechanistic to holistic, with no preeminent view emerging as yet.

Immigrants in Adult Education: Whose Language for What?

In Canada, the teaching of English as a second language (ESL) has long been the primary focus of efforts to provide education for adult immigrants. Copies of the *Handbook for New Canadians*, by Alfred Fitzpatrick (1918), a text developed for use with immigrants working in forestry and mining camps around 1920 are still available in many libraries. But how have assumptions about the goals of immigrant education changed since those early days? A recent article by Alistair Pennycook (1989) critiques the pedagogical stance of contemporary ESL educators, showing how language education has been structured "to overlook the political dimensions of the concept of language, ignoring the intimate connections between language and the development of the nation state" (p.592). Pennycook faults current approaches as essentially ahistorical and apolitical, rooted in pseudoscientific attempts to quantify and abstract communication from its social context, clinically rendering it as technique and method. Critical theorists Giroux and Simon (1988) relate this rise of technique within education as a whole to trends within society:

> Educational reform has been linked to the imperatives of big business. Schools in this perspective are training grounds for different sectors of the workforce; they are seen as providing knowledge and occupational skills that are necessary for expanding both domestic production and foreign investment. This view links schooling to the demands of a technocratic and specialized literacy. (p.9).

By deemphasizing the personal and social needs of immigrants in favour of instrumental or functional language, the content of many ESL programmes becomes a means to devalue the legitimate human concerns of immigrants. Their needs, which may or may not be expressible in English, become irrelevant to conceptions of education as a whole. Predictably, and with equally predictable consequences, many immigrant learners struggle for success within the parameters of the educational system as it is presented to them, investing in the same belief that if they only improve their proficiency in English, opportunities for education and employment will open up for them. For those who do not become more proficient, there is always more ESL or the alternative possibility of marginal employment.

Evidence of the marginal position of minorities and minority issues is abundant in adult education. For the most part, education for adult immigrants is viewed by both government and educators mainly as "language training", revealing the assumption that immigrants and refugees need only to learn English in order to adjust to Canadian life. This is evident in statements such as the following:

> If Canadians want to promote the full participation of all immigrants in the wider society, more extensive language training will have to be provided. Training should be tailored to the broader needs of immigrants and not just ensure labour market readiness (Thomas, 1990, p.6).

The specialization of minority adult learning needs to language is pervasive (Ho, 1990; Hynes, 1987) but characteristic of a system which is focussed on the particular differences of minorities, rather than the situation of these learners within the broad spectrum of adult education generally. Indeed, so divorced is most adult immigrant language education from other learning situations that, even within the same institution, completion of the highest level of ESL does not generally credit the learner for entry into any other programmes. Such learners must still undergo the same initial screening given to applicants with no previous experience at that school.

To make matters worse, within the teaching of English as a second language (ESL), the preoccupation of most programmes and of the profession, generally, is the attainment of the language itself, and not the broader educational goals of the learner. Language teaching is dominated by methodologies, approaches and techniques which tend to place learners in the role of consumers of language learning, denying their lived experience, questions and needs as appropriate content for lessons. Beginning students are said to aspire to "survival English" (Auerbach & Burgess, p. 1985), as if learning English meant the difference between life and death. In the minds of many teachers and decision makers, the experience of minority learners has been abstracted into their proficiency or deficiency in English, and language becomes the focus of their education and qualification.

Multiculturalism and Adult Education

It is worth considering how such a situation could have developed beneath the unfolding umbrella of Canadian multiculturalism, a national strategy designed to embrace "unity in diversity". As discussed earlier, many Canadians in the early part of this century considered education a vehicle of cultural homogenization (Fitzpatrick, 1919; Anderson, 1918; Woodsworth, 1909). Educational historian H. Troper (1979) links the decline of Anglo-conformity and the rise of multiculturalism to the aftermath of World War II and the demise of the British Empire. At a time, then, when former British colonies around the world were beginning to assert their independence, tensions between English and French Canadians were increasing (Burnet, 1987). The federal government responded to this crisis by initiating the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism (1967), but had not anticipated the number of briefs that they would receive from other ethnic interest

groups (Burnet, 1987, p.68). As a result, the Report on Bilingualism and Biculturalism (1967), in its final form, included a fourth volume, describing the "contribution made by other [non-British, non-French] ethnic groups to the cultural enrichment of Canada" (p.3).

In his response to Volume 4, then Prime Minister Trudeau recommended a "policy of multiculturalism within a bilingual framework" (Office of the Prime Minister, Oct. 8, 1971), outlining a vision which has affected the language and thinking of a new generation of Canadians. It is since that time that terms like "multiculturalism", "integration", and "the Canadian mosaic" have come into common usage, characterizing Canada as a vigorous and tolerant society in an increasingly unstable world.

Yet however tolerant Canadians claimed to have become, their commitment to multiculturalism was downplayed when the Charter of Rights and Freedoms was signed in 1982. Under Section 27, the government of Canada provides that the charter "shall be interpreted in a manner consistent with the preservation and enhancement of the multicultural heritage of Canadians" (Canada. Constitution Act, 1982). Regarding the implications for such a statement, Tarnopolsky (1983) observes that

> it is somewhat similar to a preamble or an 'aims' provision, which is not legally enforceable as a basis for action in the courts to order the taking of specific action. Nevertheless, such a provision has great psychological value in giving a government and the people 'the broad directions in which they are going' (p.14).

The introduction of Section 27 itself actually had minimal impact across the general field of adult and post-secondary education. Its vague embrace of the pervasive implications of multiculturalism did little to provide direction at the level of social and educational programming.

Bill C-93, the Canadian Multiculturalism Act, was passed in July of 1988, but, in and of itself, has produced almost no reaction from the academic community nor the public. It may be asked by adult educators why they should concern themselves with a document which seems of so little consequence when there are so many truly pressing issues facing them daily. The recession of the early 1990s has brought budget cuts and programme reductions at a time when demands for programme change to keep up with advances in technology are a constant preoccupation for most of us. Programme reductions have resulted in increased student demand for remaining offerings, often the creation of waiting lists, and a review of entrance requirements.

The potential implications of the document, however, are far-reaching. The government commits itself (Canada. House of Commons, 1988) to an understanding of multiculturalism which recognizes and responds to the the cultural and racial diversity of the society, with such actions as to:

> promote the full and equitable participation of individuals and communities of all origins in the continuing evolution and shaping of all aspects of Canadian society and assist them in the elimination of any barrier to such participation. (Clause 3.1(c)).

This statement echoes the words of Prime Minister Trudeau in 1971 (Canada. Office of the Prime Minister, Oct. 8, 1971), revealing the evolutionary trace of this idea. The context of multiculturalism in society itself is made problematic. The use of words like "evolution and shaping" conveys an idea of a thing unfinished, open to interpretation, not the exclusive property of any particular group or groups. As well, the commitment to "the elimination of any barrier" acknowledges the existence of the status quo, but indicates the possibility of alternatives.

Such intentions, however, are only as powerful as the strategies and the imaginations which carry them forth, and it is here that I ask you to situate yourself, the reader. As you encounter the ideas explored here, I hope that you will consider how they may relate to the cultural contours of your own milieu, your place, perhaps allowing new questions about the emergent shape of the educational context, the relationship between the cultural centre of education (if such a centre exists) and its margins. Well-intentioned bureaucrats may "ensure", "encourage", "assist", "promote" and "facilitate" (Canada. House of Commons, 1988, p.5), but it is only possible for individuals to imagine and create space for themselves.

Policy Meets Practice — A Postmodern Dilemma

Are goals of high quality adult education compatible with the goal of full and equitable participation laid out in the Multiculturalism Policy? This question reveals the power of the issues and beliefs which lurk beneath easily given surface commitment — issues such as the need to uphold standards, the press for global competition, equality of opportunity, even the level of priority such a question occupies in the larger scheme of things. Yet concerns about composition and directions of our population are central to many other questions. At a time when Canada, like most other economically advantaged countries, is experiencing crises concerning the direction of the economy, the use and abuse of the natural environment, increasing unemployment and levels of poverty, we are also facing major societal issues: declining rates of fertility, increasing levels of immigration, the

very constitution of our national identity as one, two or several sovereign or quasi-sovereign states. Each of these issues reveals a widening discontinuity between the stories which have constructed Canada thus far and the emerging imperatives of our lived needs: economic development/ environmental balance, national prosperity/poverty among women and children, population/ multiculturalism, unity/diversity. Their concurrence, however, suggests the likelihood of even more fundamental social and structural problems (Bookchin, 1982; Capra, 1982; Greer, 1985; Henderson, 1988; World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987; King & Schneider, 1991), and to the need to generally rethink human relations in the world.

Preoccupation with change and incredulity toward the theories of modernity are consistent with what philosopher Jean-Francois Lyotard (1984) calls "the postmodern condition", a condition addressed by many theorists in education (Giroux, 1990; Botkin et al, 1979; Coombs, 1985; Illich, 1970; Shor, 1986; Cherryholmes, 1988). Lyotard contends that "the status of knowledge is altered as societies enter what is known as the postindustrial age and cultures enter what is known as the postmodern age" (p.3). People aware of the nature of the changes to be faced are regularly frustrated by the prospect of attempting to create a shape for the future with tools and materials which are designed to manufacture extensions of the present. It is this substance, the edifice of modern orthodoxy which becomes the focus of postmodern critique, as its construction is formed in language, conveyed in discourse (Caputo, 1988; Weedon, 1987; Lyotard, 1984; Foucault, 1990).

Conversely, it is the very awareness of language and community as human constructions which enables consideration of possible alternatives. Caputo (1988) locates the genesis and possibility of language in this difference, the space between you and I:

> Language arises from plurality, from the difference between us, so that to listen to someone else is always to be instructed, that is, to hear something which is not our own. The idea is not to bring all discourse under the rule of reason, of the universal which extinguishes particulars, which would eventually be to silence everyone, but to keep the lines of communication open, for there can be no end to the novelty and otherness that arises when people get together (p.69).

In communication among participants characterized by difference, it is the character of the spaces between which colours the social, the shape of community. Caputo speaks directly to concerns regarding the aspirations of the multicultural community conceived under an ideology of modernism.

> Communities are defined in terms of unity, the capacity of individuals to swallow their differences and to come to common convergence, to stand as "one". So defined, a community resists otherness, cannot tolerate the existence of "individuals", and it ends up adopting ex-communicative practices. That is why we need another idea of community, and maybe even another idea than community, one which is conceived in terms of its capacity to tolerate difference, its openness to the other, that is, to just the sort of people for which communities have historically shown such low tolerance (p.69).

We must ask ourselves how education might be implicated in this excommunication of individuals, how educational practice resists the experience of the other, either alienating the individual from his or her own experience or declaring his or her needs extraneous from the central project of education. It is only though such exploration that alternative meanings for education can be revealed.

Consider the situation of Grace, a native woman who is a student at the University of Alberta. As part of her Education degree, she is taking an anthropology course, learning about the role of culture, religion and language in the organization of societies. Grace, who has spent most of her life in northern Alberta, has a wealth of life experience and questions to bring to such a course. Her instructor and her text, however, introduce these topics by way of the experiences of Margaret Mead, a white woman, studying the cultures of Polynesians. Grace says that she is having a hard time understanding what these Polynesians are about. She thinks that maybe anthropology is too hard for her.

In fact, the study of anthropology should have some direct relevance to Grace's studies. Her situation at the university is framed by cultural difference, her goals situated by it. Yet Grace feels her own experience becoming irrelevant to a mainstream interpretation of culture, an interpretation which makes culture something so exotic, so abstract that she may never understand it. If this is the message that Grace receives, what do students from the cultural mainstream learn about their experience in Canadian society? Perhaps culture is a problem for all of us.

Documenting the Problem — In So Many Words

The immensity of the task of documenting the scope of issues which pertain to the problem of education in a culturally-diverse society almost precludes its failure. No one person could have the background in personal experience, culture, education, economics, history, philosophy, sociology, administration, to render it in terms which are satisfactory to all or any of these disciplines. Does that mean that the problem itself should be considered too complex or does it speak more to the

limitations of current notions of what constitutes academic discipline? Perhaps, once again, it is the complexity itself which commands our reinterpretation.

It is in the writings of French philosopher Michel Foucault (1973, 1987, 1990), in particular, that we can begin to unmask complexity, to find systematic analysis of the structure of some of the most powerful institutions in society: the prison, the construct of sexuality, and the construct of madness/sanity. For Foucault (1990), an understanding of power relations in society can only be considered by way of the practices by which they are enacted:

> One isn't assessing things in terms of an absolute against which they could be evaluated as constituting more or less perfect forms of rationality, but rather examining how forms of rationality inscribe themselves in practices or systems of practices, and what role they play within them. Because it's true that 'practices' don't exist without a certain regime of rationality (p.107).

Such practices may be studied by means of the discourse which characterizes them, and discourse must be understood to include both that which is officially sanctioned and that which is excluded (1990, p.101).

> Discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it. In like manner, silence and secrecy also loosen its holds and provide for relatively obscure areas of tolerance.

This play of polarities allows for the coexistence of both official and underground economies, heterosexuals and homosexuals, but it also shapes our rationality and our strategies for creating differential access to institutions, including education, by a variety of groups. In the case of immigrants, it allows for expression of multiple ethnicities — the development of a Chinatown, the construction of mosques — but it also ties requirements for participation in mainstream institutions to educational equivalence and demonstrated competence in English.

In a community characterized by increasing cultural diversity, there is a need to recognize the very structure and situation of our institutions as problematic. Without addressing the issue of what/who is included; what/who is excluded, and the even more fundamental question of why this is so, our institutions will have the simultaneous and increasing effect of excluding those, including many immigrants, who do not qualify to participate, and become increasingly irrelevant to the experience of the people and problems which characterize our society.

Chapter 3 – Describing the Study

A. Introduction

Listening and Speaking is a study of immigrant participation in adult education which focusses on the clients of a programme of Catholic Social Services, called the Language and Vocational Assessment Service. The service was established in 1985, with funding from Alberta Career Development and Employment (Settlement Services), to assist newcomers in understanding their educational needs and the opportunities available to them in the community. Although the programme is sponsored by Catholic Social Services, it should be made clear that service is made available to the whole community, regardless of religious belief.

The story of this study is as much about the writer as it is about the immigrants who are profiled in it. It begins in my experience as an ESL teacher who has taken on many roles — classroom teacher, resource consultant, volunteer teacher trainer, administrator, teacher educator, materials developer, politician, counsellor, researcher. Adult ESL teaching has been at the forefront of implementing practices now becoming more and more common in more mainstream programmes. There are few "real" teaching jobs available — most teachers work from session to session, on contract, or for hourly wages. The people who work here are a varied group. Many have travelled extensively. Some are certified teachers. There are more than a few who bring missionary zeal to the work. It is the learners, however, who make the programmes happen.

Each year, Canada admits more or fewer immigrants and refugees, and commits more or fewer dollars to educate them. For an increasing number of new arrivals who do not speak English, the process of learning a new language, adjusting to a new country, and adapting education and work experience can take some time so that, in addition to the pressure of new arrivals waiting for programmes, there is a cumulative need for education among those who have been in the country for two, four — in some instances — ten, twelve or more years.

But who are these learners? The literatures of Sociology and Education provide a particular kind of portrait of the immigration phenomenon, and of immigrant adaptation in Canada and other countries. Such research is composed mainly of statistical description (Canada. Employment and Immigration, 1986; Canada. Employment and Immigration, 1990; Alberta. Career Development, 1989).

interpretations of that experience (Canada. Employment and Immigration Advisory Council, 1991; TESL Canada, 1981), and of theories of adaptation abstracted through observation of immigrants (Schermerhorn, 1970; Berry, 1987).

It is an incomplete picture. While such studies have been successful in providing a particular kind of picture of immigration and adaptation, they have also served to obscure the lifeworld of the very individuals whose descriptive features and activities they have captured in generalizations. Immigrants represent an extremely diverse range of ethnicities and backgrounds. Statistical information is organized within the Canadian researcher's frame of reference, often a very different perspective from that of the immigrant. The compilation of "information about immigrants" as an identifiable group has often served to homogenize their difference, rendering them, by definition, essentially other than Canadian, characteristically strange and problematic. The degree and experience of individual difference, however, is obliterated.

I sometimes meet some of my old students — in the supermarket, at the airport, at the university, in the doughnut shop. For each of them, adaptation to life in Canada has had a different meaning. For some, it has been liberating, for others, an ongoing struggle. My reaction to these reencounters has also varied. Many people are delighted to meet an old teacher, but there are others — the ones who look away and try to deny the pain or embarrassment that they once had to learn English. There are the ones that I cannot face — the smoke-hardened face of the war photographer in the doughnut shop, the anger-crazed face of the perennially jobless man, the tearful face of an abused woman with nowhere to go.

In 1989, I accepted an educational counselling position with the Language and Vocational Assessment Services (LVA) of Catholic Social Services (Immigration) in Edmonton. This service was established in June of 1985, following consultations with Alberta Manpower concerning the lack of appropriate educational counselling services for adult immigrants. Because most school and career counsellors lacked training and experience in working with immigrants, many aspiring students (and workers) found it difficult to get adequate information about how to prepare for adult education and post-secondary programmes. For most clients, even obtaining an objective assessment of their English competence vis a vis various school entrance requirements was a major obstacle. As well, previous to the opening of the centre, there was no local facility coordinating and providing information about the range and availability of ESL programmes in Edmonton.

I worked as a member of a team of multilingual counsellors. The service included both mother tongue and English language assessment in addition to counselling which considered skills and education earned in the client's home or

adopted country. We worked to help clients develop strategies for adapting through education and upgrading to meet Canadian requirements for jobs or to plan for further education. The intake session for most clients included collection of demographic information, often followed by assessment and then discussion of successes and problems in accessing ESL programmes, adult or post-secondary education, or employment. The plan for assessment was practical, beginning in the counsellor's gauging of client responses to questions on the intake form, then moving to agency-developed tasks of mother tongue and English skills at various levels. Such assessments generally had a descriptive purpose, and were used primarily to inform clients' educational decision-making.

Subsequent sessions with the same client allowed for follow-up on suggestions and referrals from the first meeting, for discussion of how particular access or communication strategies worked or did not work for them, and a chance to share feelings and experiences with the process of adaptation.

It is the context of these counselling encounters which best illustrates the dilemma of the statistical portrait. The very format for the collection of statistical information about the client serves to structure the shape of the interview. I would find, however, that even as I was filling in the various blanks for mother tongue, length of residence, immigration status, years of education, etc., I was simultaneously receiving another story, a personal story of the struggle of discontinuity, of identity, of desire. The telling was like the ringing of a tiny bell. Each story I heard had its own unique sound, but none of the sounds disappeared, even when the telling of the story was over. Of course, there was no place on the intake form for these stories, and so, in spite of their power and insight, most of them remain with me only as echoes.

I wished to explore the tension between these two kinds of portraits of immigrants in adult education. Each presents a story from a particular perspective, but each is contained within the borders of its cultural view. This point is not incidental to the shape of the project. The problem of cultural borders characterizes the situation of this research — adult education/ESL, immigrant/Canadian, qualified/unqualified, known/unknown, minority/mainstream. How do we understand the territory of marginal groups as they intersect or parallel "mainstream" systems of society? What is "multiculturalism" to an economist or general? What are taxes to a Cambodian refugee woman? Problems of culture and social function may appear, on the surface, as related as birthdays and bank accounts, not only among those who exert authority on behalf of the society, but also among those who inhabit its margins.

My work in multicultural adult education is situated on an experiential frontier which links/separates institutions/cultural minorities. My role as a member of a dominant cultural group working with immigrant learners has directed my thoughts, actions and responsibilities across these borders, translating experiences from each side to the other. I wish to document my perspective from this border post: a perspective intended for those in the countries on each side of the border. The tension which unites/divides is my focus. The stories tell themselves.

B. The Shape of the Study

It is important that the form of this study maintain the integrity of the problem, for it is the character of the problem of cultural diversity in adult education, as much as the situation of the participants, which will be documented. Yet how can the problem best be approached? Would a statistical description clarify the characteristics of the learners as a group, permitting observation of apparent needs and goals? Perhaps individual learners need to speak about their experience in Canadian adult education, to reveal some of the very personal implications of current practice.

The study proceeds from the tension between two fundamental questions:

1. **How do adult immigrants experience adult education? (actuality)**

   and

2. **How do adult immigrants imagine adult education which allows/encourages their involvement? (possibility)**

The positioning of these two questions involves an awareness of the problem of appropriateness of current adult education models to the experience of a large number of immigrants, as documented in my master's thesis, *Survey of Immigrant Participation in the Adult Education Community of Edmonton.*

This same tension will be engaged in the design of the research. Two separate approaches to the problem will be undertaken: a narrative study and a statistical study. These modes exemplify what Bruner (1985) has called the narrative and paradigmatic ways of knowing, modes which are complementary, yet separate. The French philosopher de Certeau (1988, p.20) also remarks on the exclusivity of each mode, saying that

> everyday linguistic practices (as well as the space of their tactics) have to be ignored in order for the scientific practices to be able to operate in their own field.

Yet both ways of knowing have power to speak about the issues. It is necessary to acknowledge both if the possibilities for community are ever to develop beyond

isolated debates on the relative superiority of a particular research paradigm. The narrative and the paradigmatic are parallel forms, descriptive of similar phenomena. Narrative can describe a single individual's experience from his or her personal perspective, but it cannot address group characteristics or issues. Statistics can offer a superficial description of group features but cannot touch upon individual experience. Yet each mode has implications for interpretation of the other. There is a need to articulate the space between them, and to encourage dialogue about issues addressed by each mode in a genuinely (both emotionally and intellectually) responsive way.

I have chosen a narrative focus because I wish to create a place where learners may speak for themselves, to explicate their own experience of education and their intentions for social participation. In theoretical terms, narrative methodology can be viewed as inherently partial (Lyotard,1984), proceeding from the experience of individuals, relating experience to practice. It provides a place to begin with the identity of the learner and to explore a view of education from that perspective. The researcher's role, as well, is partial, as I become a participant in the construction and interpretation of stories.

The stories of learners in the Language and Vocational Assessment Programme can also be understood as they are portrayed statistically. A statistical study of the problem represents individuals only as elements of a larger whole: it is a generalized portrait of a group, characterized by contours indicating intragroup difference. Such a portrait reveals important aspects of the research problem as it relates to quantifiable characteristics and needs of immigrant learners. Level of demand for training, range of educational backgrounds and occupational experience, for example, are better indicators of the scope of the problem than are individual stories. Yet it is clear that, just as in the interview situation I faced while counselling with LVA, the statistical portrait may exclude much about the individuals it purports to describe. It may even contradict the stories of individual learners with documentary numbers and graphs. Can such contradiction itself be instructive of the problem? This is a theoretical question which must be explored.

The metaphor of portraiture is somewhat inadequate for the task I have assigned it. A portrait generally represents the graphic or verbal interpretation of a single artist. It is a fixing of impressions within a particular medium. My task, however, entails a constant bringing forward of stories for sharing, exploration, consideration, appreciation. The interaction between these stories and their statistical counterpart represents a further dynamic relation. As well, the work itself projects into the community as a stimulus for sharing and exchange, an intended vehicle for change. Understood this way, the metaphor of "portrait"

extends beyond its traditional margins of fixity, inhering the possibilities of works only imagined.

1. Narrative Portraits

Learner narratives can tell only partial stories, but they are stories which are currently excluded from the legitimating discourse of adult education. They are stories characterized by the discontinuity of war, economic upheaval, immigration and adaptation. Anthropologist Mary Catherine Bateson (1990), in her introduction to the stories of women who have lived with change, calls us to explore the creative potential which arises of necessity in interrupted lives, out of complexity. There is value in what these learners can contribute to the Canadian educational context. For narrative researchers Connelly and Clandinin (1990), the experience of education is also storied: "Education is the construction and reconstruction of personal and social stories; teachers and learners are storytellers and characters in their own and other's stories" (p.2).

If statistics are understood as we interpret them from a page, the same cannot be said of narrative. In the case of the immigrant learners who were interviewed in this study, accent, form of expression, intelligibility in English are salient features of the problem of education. Many immigrants are extremely visible in Canadian society, not just in terms of their skin colour, but also their size and their appearance. I am struggling with this problem as it concerns both the form and content of the study. I had considered a variety of media, including the use of video, but this proved unworkable for ethical reasons. Exposing both the individual and the story is not a tenable goal for this project. Thus the stories are presented in print.

In choosing to interview each participant in this study, and to present their stories as told to the researcher, the reader should be aware of changes which have taken place in the character of the stories. First of all, each story has passed through several kinds of filters. Aspects of the storyteller's appearance and language use are no longer evident. It should also be evident that physical expressions of the interlocutors have, by necessity, disappeared. Next, features of accent, word choice and arrangement disappeared as the taperecordings were transcribed. One participant was moved to declare that he sounded much better on paper than he did in real life! And, in terms of intonation and pronunciation, it was true. The traces of his origins were muted as his words emerged onto my computer screen. I also wish to acknowledge my own filtering, since it was I who have rendered the transcripts into more readerly narratives, coinciding with the goals of the project. I cannot state strongly enough, however, that every attempt has been

made to maintain the aesthetic integrity of the story as told by the teller, and that both transcripts of the interviews and the stories have been read and approved by each storyteller before they were shared with others.

The idea of readerly narratives was, I felt, integral to communicating my intentions for many reasons. It is one thing to read about or listen to an informative talk about immigrant issues, quite another thing to have the opportunity to share an individual's personal experience with immigration. The telling of stories is also one of the earliest, most widespread modes of teaching and learning. Most people become familiar with the form and purpose of stories at a very early age. The same information could have been offered in transcript form, but it would have been somewhat tedious reading. It was only after completing a number of the interviews which provided the substance of the stories, however, that I began to recognize the existence of a further objective: that these stories maintain the aesthetic and intellectual wholeness of their telling. Academic writing can be flat and, sometimes, challenging to the reader's patience, yet I found my subject to be engaging and eloquent. It thus became a goal of this researcher to convey the variety and unpredictable beauty of experience through the medium of the stories, and finally, through the multiformity of this dissertation.

a) Learner narratives: I had originally planned to involve ten to fifteen learners as participants in the study, but that number was far too great for the size of this study. I later chose to work with a more manageable four. Selection was arranged in consultation with counsellors in the Language and Vocational Assessment Service (LVA) of Catholic Social Services and is not intended to represent a sample, but rather the range of experience among clients of different countries of origin, ages, sexes, and immigration categories.

With each participant, initial contact was made by telephone. I arranged an initial meeting to explain the goals and rationale of the study, and the nature of the involvement sought. Each one was invited to participate of his or her own volition. Protection of participant anonymity was assured. Six possible participants were approached. Of these, four agreed to participate, under the terms outlined, and signed a release to that effect. One candidate declined for health reasons. The other did not contact me again following our initial meeting. No reason was given.

I subsequently met separately with each participant in four to five interviews to listen and speak about their stories, particularly as they relate to education. Each session lasted from 30 to 40 minutes, and was audiotaped and later transcribed. Transcriptions were returned to the participant for verification. Participants were free to add, delete or change any aspect of the transcript. Because of the complex nature of stories and people, I met with each person several times to

ensure that the narrative was complete and that it accurately represented his or her intent.

The stories are presented without my analysis of individual or shared characteristics. I have resisted the scholarly urge to overlay the talk of others with my own. In my experience, it is all too often that, when an immigrant speaks, another person steps in to explain what they mean. Many people do not hear them beyond recognizing the presence of an accent and sensing the awkwardness inherent in putting foreign words together. The stories I have heard, however, speak more eloquently than any sociological analysis of their intent could hope to.

b) Sharing our stories: The reason why stories are an integral part of this study is that they are told so that someone might hear them. As a first step in this process of sharing, I invited all of the participants in the narrative study to read each others' stories, then to share impressions of the process and to discuss what they had read with the individuals who had told the stories. This discussion took place following a luncheon at my home. The meeting of the group was recorded and transcribed as a way of bringing the stories into contact with each other. Since the most interesting features of that conversation focussed on alternatives, I have included the results of this meeting in Chapter 7, as part of the articulation of an alternative view of adult education.

2. A Statistical Portrait

Acknowledging the place of statistics within the scope of discussion concerning immigrant experience permits the use of both federal and provincial government documents, a primary source of information about immigrants and immigration. Government reports, especially in matters related to population, are almost exclusively quantitative. As for the power of its methodology, the use of statistics cannot be overlooked in modern decision-making. The Canadian psychologist Ferguson (1981, p.4) makes this clear in his introduction to statistical methods.

> Statistics attempts to make induction rigorous. Induction is regarded by some scholars as the only way in which new knowledge comes into the world. While this statement is debatable, the role in modern society of scientific discovery through induction is obviously of the greatest importance.

Statistical information is widely available and extensively used as a basis of decision-making by government officials. As LVA's sponsor, the Alberta government has required the service to collect and report information about its clientele. Statistics from that source are also readily available for the years 1987 to 1992.

The database contains typical demographic information, including age, years of schooling, country of origin, occupation, mother tongue, revealing aspects of the character of the LVA clientele over a period of five years, and indicating both changing and more constant features of that population. Such statistics tell a particular kind of story about their subject. In this case, they provide a description of a large group of people (5002 clients) over a period of several years.

Gaining Access

Unlike my experience in beginning the process of narrative, gaining access to the LVA statistics involved a very lengthy process. First of all, a meeting was arranged, in July 1992, with the person in charge of the computer systems for Catholic Social Services. The LVA coordinator explained the nature of the study and told him that Catholic Social Services had agreed to support my work. We reviewed the LVA Intake Form (Appendix 1) together and identified the particular fields that would be used. I asked when we might get a copy of the database to begin the statistical analysis.

Initially, the database information was promised for the end of September. I applied for technical assistance from the Centre for Research, Measurement and Evaluation (CRAME), in the Faculty of Education, and met with a consultant to discuss the format required for the university mainframe computer (MTS). The database was quite large (5002 cases), and this precluded my using a personal computer for the analysis. Information requirements were conveyed to the computer systems manager at Catholic Social Services (CSS). Finally, in October, I received a computer disc with the information, but it was in report rather than a database form. I returned to CSS for changes. I received the database information and it was entered into the MTS system. Two categories of information, however, were missed, and I had to return to CSS for another disc containing those two fields.

As well, unlike my experience with the narrative study (which began with a telephone call and a meeting), in the early stages of the database study I had very little control over what happened. I could not begin to work with the statistics until a whole variety of technical issues were resolved. I was dependent on the computer expertise of people in two institutions. Owing to problems of actually gaining access to the database and then formatting it so that it would be meaningful to the university computer system, I could not begin to work with the database until January of 1993.

C. Exhibiting Two Very Different Pictures of the Same Thing — Analysis of the Project

Attempts to marry narrative and statistical form and content within the research, as might be anticipated, resulted in a high degree of challenge to the researcher. Each type of presentation — narrative and statistical — has the power to reveal certain things, to suppress others. Narrative portraits can eludicate the experience of individual learners trying to relate their own stories within a new framework, a Canadian framework. They can reveal the power of discontinuity as it motivates, erects barriers, disorients. Because of this, the study, at certain points, became almost two separate studies: the first, a series of narrative portraits of individual learners; the second, a statistical portrait responding to the same questions. In fact, it was almost impossible to work on each section simultaneously. The thought processes and literature organizing one part were totally alien to the other. Yet I had to be in control of both!

This problem proved most challenging in constructing Chapter 6, intended as a conversation between the position of the storyteller and the statistician. I struggled for many weeks to find a format suitable to the task and the words to make it happen. As I did, the space between the two positions grew deeper and more intense, becoming almost theatrical. My response was, finally, to the drama of the encounter. Chapter 6 is theatre. In it, the respective positions informing the narrative and the statistical are personified as researchers. We meet at my house, as did the participants in the narrative study, to speak together about our research positions and projects. Curiously, the structure of Chapter 6 allowed room for the unexpected: the articulation of a third position. That position exists between two other very loud and authoritative voices: it is the place of the teacher practitioner. The teacher-practitioner may be informed sometimes by the research and reports of statisticians and sometimes by the stories of individual learners. Part of his or her ongoing work becomes the task of interpreting each of these consituencies — statisticians and learners — to the other. Ultimately, the teacher-practitioner must find ways to work within a position characterized by paradox: is education ultimately responsible to learners or does it simply serve a larger economic and social system?

In struggling with the problem of these two distinct perspectives, I found that there were many aspects which complemented each other while remaining asynchronous. These are elements, however related, which could never collide because they never connect. For example, consider the story of a woman who has prepared for work calibrating precision scales. She has worked for many years in this field and anticipates the possibility of moving into a related field. Her

paperwork can reveal her level of education and her years of experience. It cannot, however, address the impact of technological change on this woman's employability. She has no experience with digital technology, or, for that matter, with computers at all. Her skills have been rendered historical by her geographical relocation. What does it mean that she needs to upgrade her skills? How does this compare with the experience of Canadian-born students?

I had originally imagined a thematic analysis resulting from both kinds of information. This idea proved only partially workable for reasons already discussed: the types of talk, language use and situation of each project resulted in very different end products. I wondered if it were impossible to even consider an analysis of this information. Yet, in spite of the differences between them, the two projects did overlap. There were certain subjects which were common, although the common elements were hardly descriptive of the whole. The topic of employment, for example, appears as a topic in each section, as does previous education.

I found that the exploratory framework required for this task was that of the conversation, already established in Chapter 6 to work the tension between the two positions studied. In fact, the possibility of an conversation concerning the content of the research provided a vehicle to bring all participants in that chapter's conversation, finally, to a shared task. The analysis therefore contains comparative and descriptive elements. It is really a mapping of the issues, overlapping or not, revealed during the research. As you shall see, the participants in the discussion must work together to articulate a description of the issues they all can agree to.

The next two chapters of the dissertation present two portraits of the LVA clientele: the narrative and the statistical. Chapter 4 introduces a statistical portrait, beginning with a characterization of the LVA programme and moving toward a description of its clientele. Chapter 5 presents four stories of former clients of LVA, constructed through conversations with me. Following these two very different presentations, there is a break in the direction of the work, as we adjourn to my house to listen in on the conversation I had with the statistician and the storyteller concerning their experiences with immigrants and information. With Chapter 7, the direction of the study resumes, and an analysis of the context of the problem — considering the import of both statistical and narrative kinds of information — begins.

Chapter 4 – Clients of the Language and Vocational Assessment Service: A Statistical Portrait

Introduction

Chapter 4 presents the first of the two methodological approaches to the topic of immigrant experience in adult education in Edmonton: the statistical. In it, the reader will gain some background knowledge about the issues and the agency, Catholic Social Services, which have brought the statistical database I used into existence. Try to keep in mind that the goal of this chapter is to create a kind of description or portrait of the clientele of a counselling service, not to provide exhaustive analysis of variable interactions. As you read through the chapter, you will gradually be introduced to a variety of factors affecting immigrant experience in adult education. I hope that you will find my presentation instructive of the problem.

Background to the Initiation of the Language and Vocational Assessment Service Programme

In late 1984, Alberta Career Development and Employment (ABCDE) initiated a plan to fund two assessment and referral centres for immigrants in Alberta. The timing of the initiative followed a period of several years of large scale refugee resettlement in Canada, including the arrival of the Vietnamese, the Chileans, Soviet Jews and other groups. In spite of attempts to resettle some newcomers, notably the Vietnamese, in locations throughout Alberta, most immigrants gravitated toward major centres where better services were generally available. The concept of the centres was initially put forward to ABCDE's Settlement Services Unit by a group of ESL programme coordinators, the Calgary ESL Coordinating Committee (CAESL), in response to a critical report from the Vietnamese community in Calgary. Both the Calgary Viets' Association and local programmers presented the case that there was inadequate information about language training and education for newcomers and that more help was needed to assist them.

The Manager of Alberta's Settlement Services at that time, Karen Fingas, agreed. She had observed that many people were being recycled through existing ESL programmes instead of receiving training which might be more appropriate to their needs (personal communication, February 3, 1993). She felt that an

assessment and counselling service would be of benefit both to immigrants, as well as to programmers and teachers who needed input as to how to better tailor their offerings. From the point of view of government, Ms. Fingas indicated that the limited documentation of numbers or needs of immigrants both in and out of ESL programmes made it difficult to gauge funding for future years. Financial decisions tended to be based on emotional reactions to public demand rather than on documented evidence of need.

The two centres were implemented as short term projects. Ms. Fingas (personal communication, February 3, 1993) states that she was able to use existing programme funds and redeploy them into the referral centres. No new money was made available for this initiative. At the time, she felt that the Calgary group (CAESL Committee) was more interested in the idea and was dealing with a more diverse student group than those in Edmonton. The Catholic Social Services project in Edmonton had a more sophisticated staff, but Ms. Fingas said that she felt the approach taken there involved counsellors a little too much in individual cases and did not sufficiently address the broader community issues. Each centre developed autonomously, and each had its own way of relating to ESL programmers in the community: the Calgary Centre began under the direction of Calgary area ESL programmers while, in Edmonton, service was provided by Catholic Social Services, at arm's length from programmers.

The Preliminary Report of the two pilot projects (Alberta Career Development and Employment, Dec. 1985, p.1) states that both centres were originally designed to:

(a) counsel immigrants regarding ESL training options,
(b) determine the availability of existing full-time ESL training and assist the individual to access suitable programs,
(c) identify gaps and recommend potential programming which could be mounted to meet identified needs,
(d) follow-up with program participants with the view to evaluating impact of full-time ESL training.

They were intended primarily to serve the information and programming needs of the ESL community and government offices.

The research presented in this chapter will focus only on the centre in Edmonton, but it is important for readers to recognize the context of parallel developments in both Alberta cities. As well, it is important to realize that, at the time of the inception of these projects, they were the only government-funded exemplars of educational counselling for adult immigrants in the country (A.M. Fantino, supervisor of LVA, personal communication, Feb. 25, 1993).

Records indicate that client numbers in LVA have increased from the initial year's registration for each centre of about five hundred (Alberta Career Development and Employment, Dec. 1985). That year's report observed that clients of both programs were fairly similar, but that "Calgary figures included a very large number of immigrants from China (Cantonese-speakers) while Edmonton had virtually none". Information also showed that, at that time, gender representation was fairly even, with males representing 53% of clientele, and females 47%. The largest number of registrants appeared to be those in Canada less than one year (41%). Enrollment declined with residency, so that those in Canada for six or more years represented only 10% of the total registration in both centres.

A study comparing the development and relative success of both the Calgary and Edmonton models merits further research, but it is not a task which I will undertake in this study. Instead, I will focus specifically on the character of the service and clientele of the Language and Vocational Assessment Services (LVA) in Edmonton, located within Catholic Social Services. My intention is to situate that programme historically and socially, and to describe the character of its clientele. The setting of this particular settlement agency serves as the context for my study of immigrants in adult education.

The Language and Vocational Assessment Service at Catholic Social Services in Edmonton

This research profiles the clients of the Language and Vocational Assessment Service, the unit established by Catholic Social Services in Edmonton. Service is provided by a coordinator working with four counsellors, and is initiated in response to client request or upon referral of the client from another agency (eg. Alberta Family and Social Services, Workers' Compensation) or office (eg. Canada Employment or the Alberta Career Centre). Most of the counsellors are immigrants with professional backgrounds, not necessarily in human services. Each of these people speaks one or more of the languages of the main client groups. They work predominantly with clients who share that mother tongue, but they may also work with clients from other language communities. One of the counsellors is an ESL teacher who works with clients from a variety of language groups.

What kind of service is provided to clients? In most cases, the meeting of the client and counsellor includes two main parts: intake and assessment. During the intake process, the counsellor documents basic demographic information about the client (see Appendix I), including age, country of origin, experience in learning English, educational background. This is followed by an assessment of both mother tongue (reading and writing) and English skills (speaking, listening, reading, writing

and pronunciation). Most counsellors have professional, but non-education backgrounds. Major criteria in designing a testing programme, then, were that the instruments should be straightforward and easy to use. The tests were developed in-house, and were gauged to five point scales of proficiency for both mother tongue and English (see Appendices 2 and 3). For mother tongue assessments, there are subtests at various proficiency levels for reading and writing. Listening and speaking skills are usually assessed during the interview process. For English, there are subtests at various levels for the skill areas reading and writing. Again, listening and speaking skills are generally assessed during the interview process.

Once the counsellor has completed the intake and assessment procedures, he or she can begin to talk with the client about their experience and their plans, and about courses of action that might be available to them: full-time study, part-time study, upgrading, literacy education, vocational training.

It should be understood that the database information to be presented in this study represents quite a recent technological innovation for, although the LVA Service opened in June of 1985, a computerized information system was not introduced by the agency until late in fiscal year 1987. In looking at the computerized records, it appears that fewer than twenty clients registered with the programme during 1987. In reality, those few cases represent early attempts to make information about the service more accessible both for government and research purposes. This study incorporates 5002 such client records, for the years 1987 to 1992. For the purposes of gauging annual participation, however, records for the year 1987 were deleted because, in no way, could they be considered representative or complete.

Variables Studied

These records allow us to examine a number of characteristics of individuals and of the total clientele of LVA, as a group. A number of variables can be observed, including:

a) **Total registrants** — Indicates the total number of clients registered with the programme during a calendar year. A problem with this measure is the amount of paperwork. The form used (Appendix 1) requires considerable time to complete and may not have been used with clients who have a particular question or educational need unrelated to assessment (personal communication, Anamaria Fantino, Feb. 25, 1993). It is, however, the best indicator of participation which is available.

b) **Gender** — We can observe the balance between men and women registered, and consider how gender relates to education and language level.

c) **Birthdate** — Age of clients is key in understanding what educational needs are likely to exist. It can be anticipated that particular issues will arise for people at different stages in their lives. A large number of people of working age, for example, has implications for vocational training and upgrading while sizeable numbers of older learners may speak to the need for programming for seniors. Women at home with children represent another kind of age-related concern.

d) **Arrival in Canada** — This variable allows us to consider how long clients have been in Canada before they seek assistance. It is also relevant to client age and to English proficiency.

e) **Last Class Attended** — How long have clients been out of school? Last class is rated on a scale from one to four:
1 = less than one year, 2 = one to three years, 3 = four to six years and 4 = more than six years since school leaving.

f) **Years of Education** — Indicates the years of formal schooling, as stated by the client.

g) **English at Home** — Counsellors ask clients if they studied any English in their own country. The information provided is a straight yes or no.

h) **English in Canada** — Counsellors ask clients if they have studied English in Canada before. Answers are yes or no.

i) **Country of Birth** — As distinguished from mother tongue, this indicates the client's country of origin.

j) **Immigration Category** — Indicates the immigration status of the client on arrival to Canada.

k) **Occupation at Home** — Represents the range and frequency of occupations in the home country as stated by clients. Unfortunately, the categories in this and the next section, "Occupation in Canada", are awkward to code for the computer (Occupations Codes — Appendix 4) This information has not been consistently documented, although the profile which can be prepared offers some insights.

l) **Occupation in Canada** — As above, this section documents occupations in Canada, as stated by clients prior to assessment.

m) **Employment Status** — Identifies the client's employment status at the time of assessment.

n) **Overall English Assessment** — Six measures of English language proficiency are assessed, first through an oral interview, then through a progressive series of reading and writing tasks. Assigned are listening, speaking, pronunciation, reading, writing, and grammar scores, together

with an overall or average score. An interpretation of the five point score range is provided in Appendix 3. Given the number of cases involved in this study, only the overall score for each client is used.

o) **First Language Assessment** — The first language assessment is given, where possible, by a worker who is fluent in that language. It includes both reading and written assignments, and is graded on a scale similar to that for the Overall English Assessment (see Appendix 2).

p) **Mother Tongue** — This category documents the language first learned and still used by the client.

Such a broad range of characteristics, documented over a period of time, allows some description of the clientele of the programme, and by extension, some insights into the educational questions they face as a group. Indeed, if some description of the LVA clientele is achieved through analysis of their features as a group, I shall have achieved my goal here.

Registration

In its first year of service, the Language and Vocational Assessment Service registered about five hundred clients Alberta Career Development and Employment, Dec. 1985).[1] Registration peaked in 1988 at 1132 declined slightly until 1990, and increased again through 1992 (see Figure 1). When asked about promotion of the service, programme director Anamaria Fantino noted that there had been quite a lot of publicity in the early days of the programme, but that the need for it had declined in recent years as community awareness of the service grew (A.M. Fantino, personal communication, 25 February 1993). Ms. Fantino observed that she already received as many clients as could be served with the funding available, and that increases to funding had been minimal since the programme began.

In any case, the increasing demand for service at LVA is evidence of the need for language and vocational counselling among immigrants. When I asked Ms. Fantino about other vocational counselling available to immigrants, she spoke about the Alberta Career Centres, a branch of Alberta Career Development and Employment, and said that that agency had been advisors to her programme in the early days (A.M. Fantino, personal communication, 25 February 1993). The Career Centres staff, however, had had very little experience in dealing with immigrant clients, possessed no on-staff interpreters, and, as well, were unfamiliar with cross cultural aspects of counselling. Their organization seemed unable to respond to the

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[1]This number should be regarded only as an approximate measure of number of clients seen since, after a client registers, he or she often returns for ongoing personal support, further counselling, to discuss a new problem, and so on.

specific needs of immigrants, and was more comfortable in referring such clients to Catholic Social Services. LVA staff continue to take advantage of workshops offered by the Career Centre.

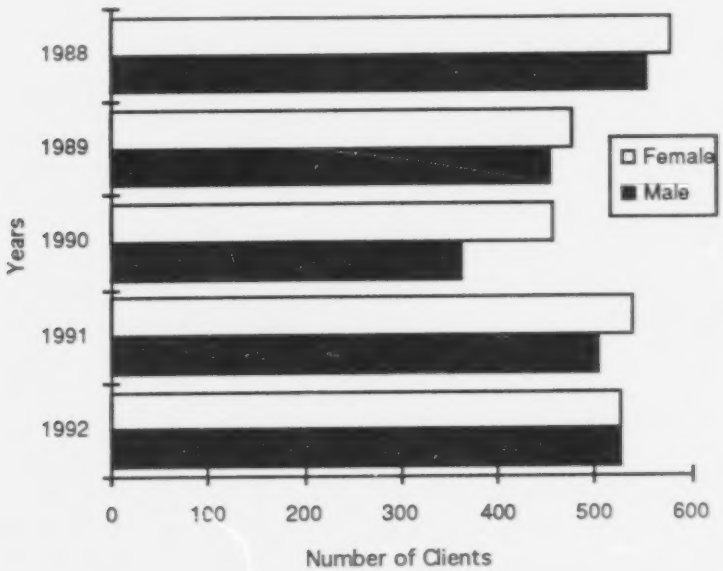

Figure 1. Language and Vocational Assessment Service: Annual Registration by Gender

Gender Differences in Registration

Annual Registration shows some variance by gender (Figure 1). In all years until 1992, there have been slightly more women registrants than men. In 1990, the number of women registering exceeded that of men by almost one hundred. It is important to consider these differences in the context of employment and educational opportunities, and of family obligations. The discrepancy could reflect a number of possibilities, based on my experience as a counsellor with the programme: 1) women are more open to seeking help than men; 2) immigrant women have greater difficulty finding appropriate educational programmes than men; 3) immigrant women come to register in English programmes for women only (Settlement Language Programmes[2]); 4) immigrant women have more difficulty than men gaining meaningful, well paying employment and are more likely to seek counselling to improve their situation. That the numbers of men and women are

[2]These programs no longer exist.

equal in 1992 may indicate the effect of a worsening employment situation for men or they may indicate that employment and educational opportunities for both men and women are becoming either equally bad or equally good. The federal government's recent change in language policy and programming (Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada or LINC) most likely also affected client numbers.

Major Language Groups

But who are these people? Figure 2 illustrates the major language groups composing the clientele of the programme. The largest single group represented is the Vietnamese, making up 23.7% of clients. Spanish-speakers are the next largest group (21.4%), followed by those who speak Cantonese (20.3%). After these groups, there is a significant drop in numbers to the next largest group, Polish speakers who account for only 6.4% of clients, and Mandarin speakers who make up 4.6%. The size of participation by other groups, however, almost equals the size of the Vietnamese group, making it important to understand which smaller groups also use this service. Among the larger small populations in this group are those who speak Persian [Farsi] (3.9%), Amharic (1.6%), Khmer (2.1%) and Tigrinya (1.3%).

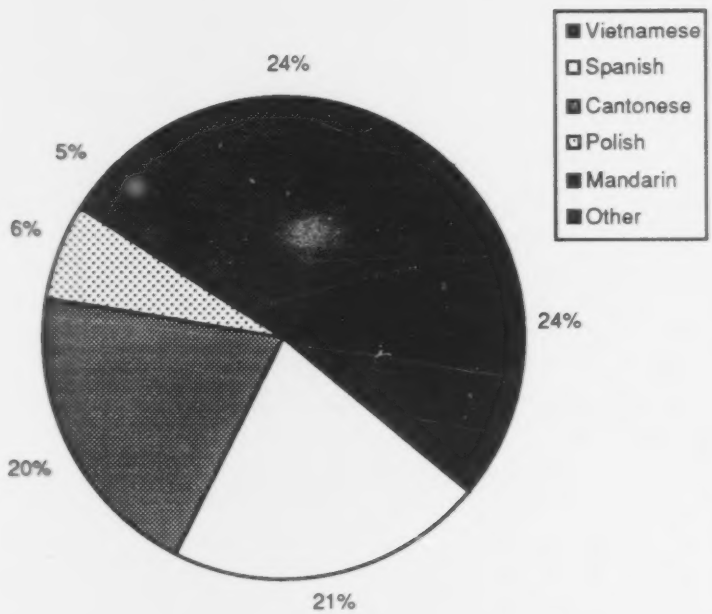

Figure 2. Language and Vocational Assessment Service: Registrations by Mother Tongue

This information can be cross-referenced with government statistics concerning immigration patterns. Alberta Career Development and Employment (1992) documents Alberta's top ten source countries for 1990 as headed by Hong Kong (2,538), followed by Poland (1845), Vietnam (1437), the Philippines (1316), China (1254), India 1040), Lebanon (790), England (730), USA (726), El Salvador (588) and includes an eleventh category called "Other", which accounts for some 6644 other new arrivals. The Alberta figures do, in some ways, mirror those of LVA, with large populations of Cantonese, Vietnamese, Polish, Mandarin and Spanish speakers represented. Other groups, such as those from the Philippines, India and Lebanon, however, seem to be underrepresented in LVA in terms of the Alberta statistics. What factors could account for this difference?

There are several possibilities. Some clients may be served in similar ways by other community agencies. Many South Asian women, for example, are served by Changing Together and the Millwoods Centre for Immigrants. Both the Chinese and Salvadorean communities now sponsor social service agencies. Given the difficulties of newcomers in finding information about services within the community, however, it is also likely that there are many people who receive little if any similar support.

Immigration Categories

Figure 3 (Registrations by Immigration Category) reveals that fully 50.4% of LVA clients are refugees. Compare this figure with the 1990 Alberta statistics showing immigration by refugees as accounting for only 23% of total arrivals. The Alberta figures indicate combined Family and Assisted Relative Class arrivals as the largest group, making up 50.2% of the total. By contrast, Family and Assisted Relative class immigrants account for only 31.7% of LVA clients, and are therefore underrepresented in LVA registrations in terms of their numbers in the general population.

The discrepancy between the Alberta and LVA figures is likely associated with the differences between the two classes of immigration and the sources of help available to each. Those who immigrate as members of the family class or as assisted relatives, by definition, have family members in Canada to assist with their adaptation. Refugees, on the other hand, are less likely to have family or community networks and depend more heavily on agency assistance for information. It should be noted that Catholic Social Services is among the largest refugee assisting organizations in Edmonton, providing direct assistance and orientation to all government-sponsored refugees, support to churches and community groups who sponsor refugees, and settlement assistance to newcomers

in general. By virtue of LVA's situation within Catholic Social Services, refugees may be more aware of the service than newcomers in other classes.

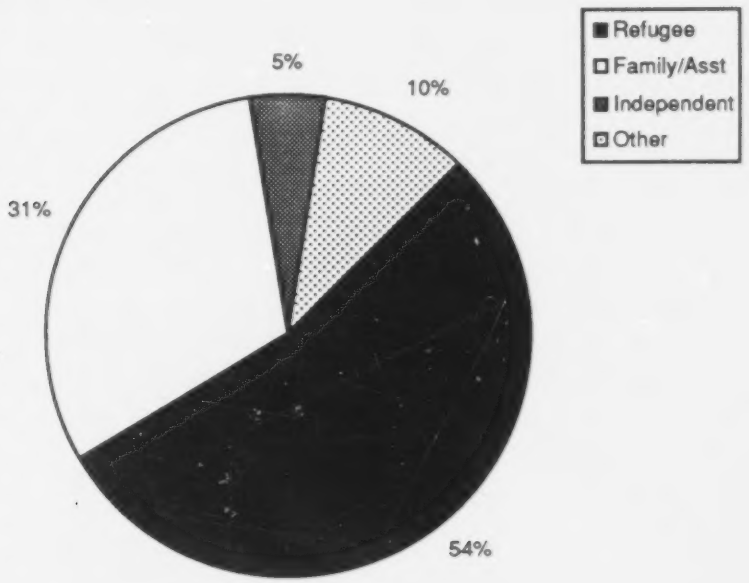

Figure 3. Language and Vocational Assessment Service: Registration by Immigration Category

Age

The information on age suggests a range of language and educational needs in the LVA population (Figure 4 – Client Distribution by Age). The shape of the curve indicates the highest participation by those between the ages of 19 and 50, that is, those of working and child-rearing age, with a plateau between the ages of 25 and 39. Further analysis of primary data, however, reveals the mean age of the population as 37.5, with slight variation in age between men and women (among men it is 38.1 years, among women it is 37.1 years). Mean calculations of age, however, are skewed by the substantial representation of older clients (see Figure 4) in comparison with those aged 19 or less. Younger people do not register because they are, for the most part, served by the basic education system. The presence of so many older learners in the programme merits further consideration. Their needs are likely to differ significantly from those of younger job and career-oriented learners in that some of them may still be in the workforce while others have retired

and seek learning opportunities as recreation and socialization with people their own age. Information on client age, then, suggests a variety of client goals, including:

a) skill training for experienced workers,
b) academic upgrading for skills training,
c) ESL programmes related to employment,
d) ESL programmes for women entering the workforce,
e) ESL and community participation programmes for women at home with children,
f) ESL and community participation programmes for seniors.

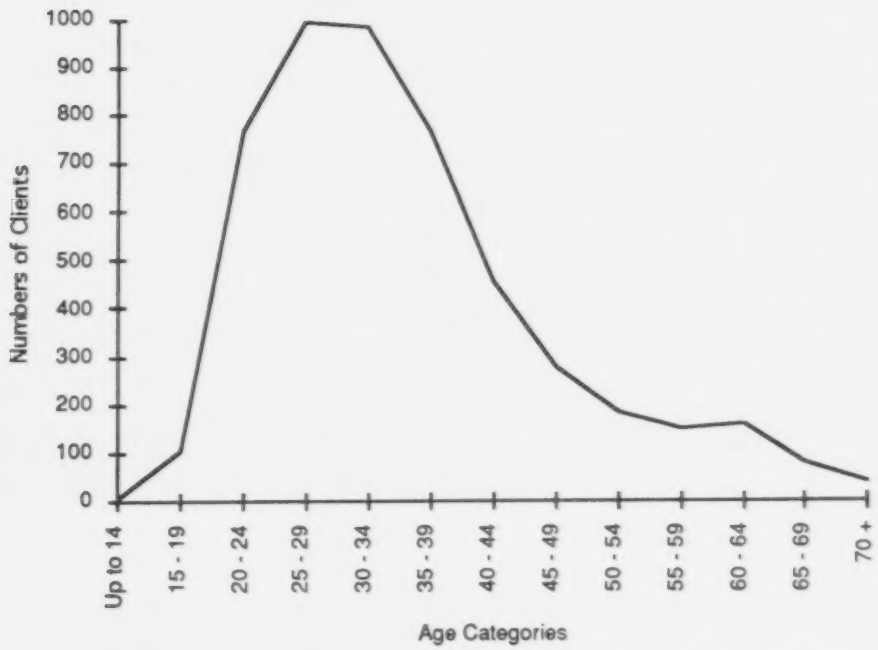

Figure 4. Language and Vocational Assessment Service: Client Distribution by Age

School Experience

It can be inferred from the range in client age that the largest part of the LVA clientele will have completed their schooling and have been working for some time before arriving in Canada, an inference corroborated by Figure 5 (Time Since Last School Experience). Figure 5 reveals that almost 73%of registrants have been away

from school for seven years or more, a significant amount of time to consider when many clients are now hoping to enrol either in ESL or skills training courses. That such a large proportion of clients have been away from formal education for so long underscores the importance of appropriate counselling to support their attempts. At a time when newcomers are unfamiliar with our education system and society generally, they are called upon to make decisions about how and when to learn English, what training they will need to upgrade their skills and how to organize their education around employment. All this at a time when Canadians themselves face growing uncertainty about employment, society and change.

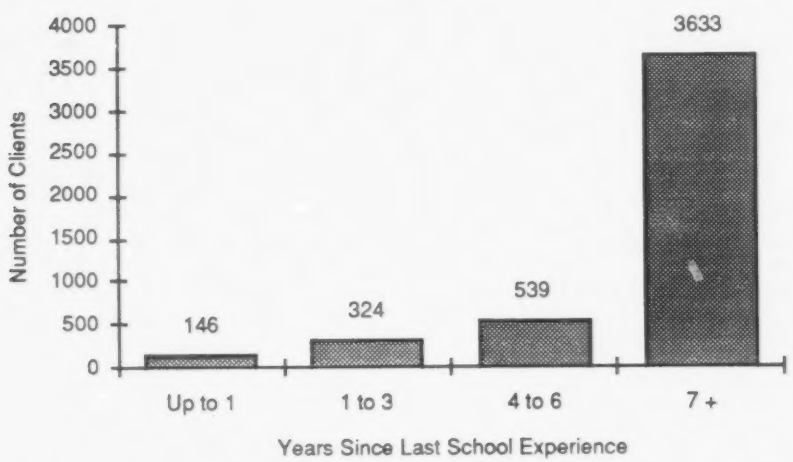

Figure 5. Language and Vocational Assessment Service: Client Registrations Indicating Time Since Last School Experience

Employment Status

In looking at Immigration Status (Figure 3), it was noted that clients registering with LVA included a large proportion of refugees because of the services for refugees provided by Catholic Social Services and because refugees lack the family and support systems in place for most family and assisted relative class individuals. A second dynamic in this process of self selection is the employment status of LVA clients (Figure 6). Here, the figures are, at first, quite overwhelming, with **65.5% of registrants stating they are unemployed**, compared with only **7.3% who are fully employed** and **6.76% who are employed part time**. This

alarming figure should be examined in context, however. It goes without saying that all newcomers are unemployed until they find their first employment and that, in their early years in Canada, immigrants are likely to be cycled through several jobs before they settle into satisfactory work. Figure 7 (Length of Residence) supports this observation by showing that the largest part of the LVA clientele is made up of those in the country less than five years. That the incidence of unemployment among newcomers correlates so strongly with registrations for counselling, however, is a point which deserves further analysis.

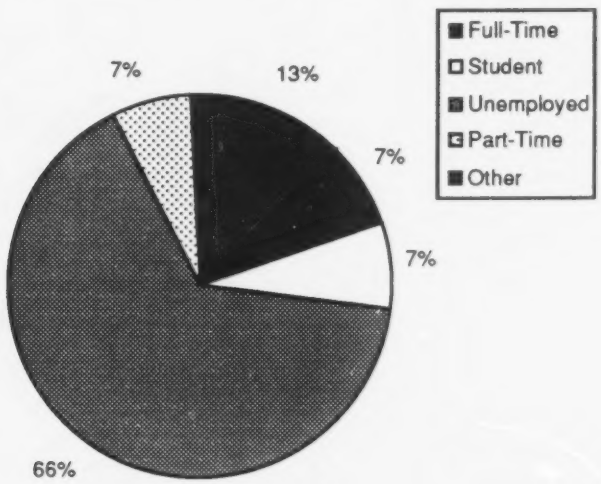

Figure 6. Language and Vocational Assessment Service: Registrations by Employment Status

When newcomers present themselves to an LVA counsellor, the counsellor reviews their histories and tries to help determine a workable plan for combining education and employment. Clients frequently require assistance to develop a strategy of short term and long term education and employment goals. If a client presents himself and says that he is a mechanic and he is looking for work in an automotive shop, he needs to learn about the process of trades qualification practiced in Alberta, to situate his own experience within the local context, to determine how he will seek qualification here, and to consider what kinds of employment he can seek in the meantime. The same discussion is necessary for those trained in health-care fields, the sciences, and education. It is almost impossible for most immigrants to practice their skills right away. In the majority of cases, academic and technical upgrading is required first.

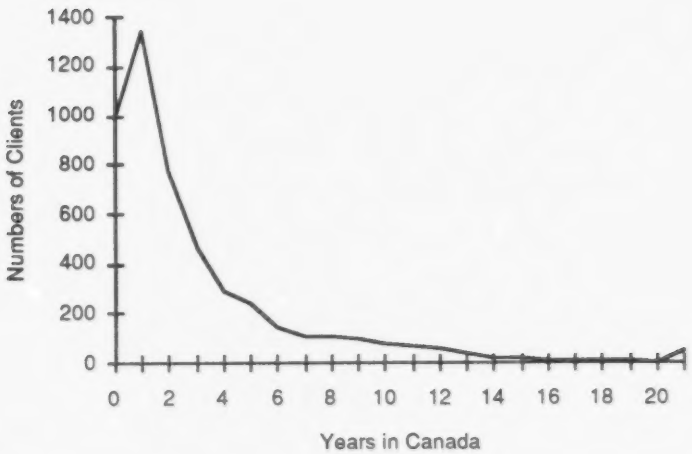

Figure 7. Language and Vocational Assessment Service: Client Registrations by Length of Residence

In fact, educational upgrading is as much an issue among immigrants as it is within the rest of the population. During the recent Community Talks that took place before the 1992 Constitutional Referendum, in a report entitled *Inventing Our Future: An Action Plan for Canada's Prosperity* (Government of Canada,1992, p.58), participants spoke extensively about the role of education in shaping the future of Canada, citing that "between 30 and 40 percent of Canadians may need to improve their ability to read and do simple arithmetic if they are to qualify for jobs or advancement." The nature of work is changing for everyone, regardless of background. Many jobs and whole industries are disappearing into obsolescence as other kinds take their place. Many former employees are now self-employed, back at school, in completely different kinds of jobs than before or left wondering what they will do next. In the case of immigrants and refugees seeking to enter the workforce, educational backgrounds can range from very little education to postgraduate study. Employment experience can range from none (among younger people) to manual labour and public service to the practice of a profession. In such a collision of forces — economic, environmental, political, social — we should anticipate that the process of negotiating a place in a new community will require time, information, imagination and opportunity. What role is there for education in the mediation of new kinds of economic and social relationships between these newest Canadians and their more established neighbours?

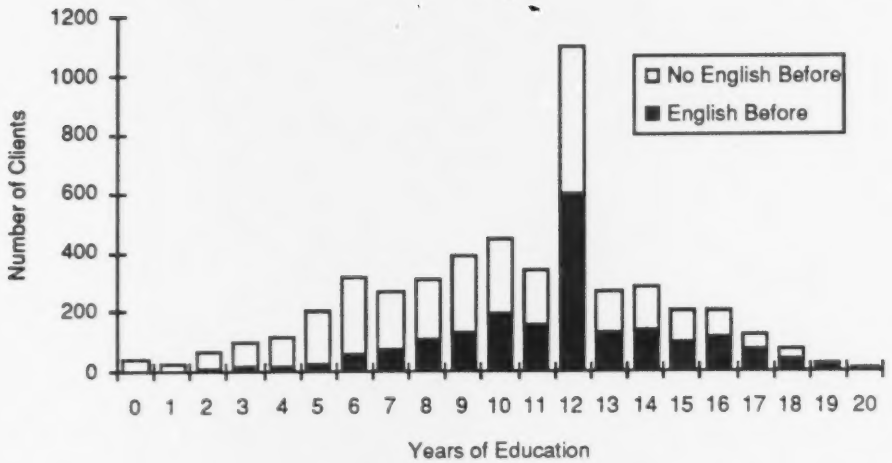

Figure 8. Language and Vocational Assessment Service: Client Registrations by Years of Education (showing relative proportions with some English before arrival)

Formal Education

The educational range among clients of LVA , as illustrated in Figure 8, is immense, ranging from very little formal education to twenty or more years. The mean for the entire population, however, is 10.4 years. Among men it is slightly higher (10.7 years); among women it is slightly lower (10.1 years). In terms of specific needs, however, more specific information is available. According to a recent immigration review provided by Alberta Career Development and Employment (January 1992, p.26), the educational breakdown of LVA clientele is quite similar to that of the general immigrant population for 1990.

Those with less than eight years of education, that is, those who have only basic literacy in their mother tongue account for 23%of the total clientele (or about 1150 people). Gender appears to be a factor as about 19%of men are in this group as opposed to slightly more than 25%of women. Although there is tremendous variety in the individual experience of these individuals as learners, workers and citizens, we can anticipate that this group, as a whole, will require a fair amount of adaptation to make education and training accessible to them.

Those with between eight and twelve years of education account for the largest proportion of clients, some 46.6 %, or about 2300 individuals. These people should have good mother tongue literacy skills and can be expected, by and large, to require fewer educational adaptations than the first group. In addition, they may be

the most flexible group, in terms of expectations and abilities. They have enough basic skills to enable them to access many educational and employment opportunities, but are less likely to share the expectations of professionals that they will do similar work in Canada as they did in their own country.

The last group, those with more than 12 years of education (12 to 20 years), constitute almost 19%of the group, a total of about 950 people. This group will have quite different educational needs and goals than either of the first two groups. Those with professional qualifications, such as engineers or lawyers, face the prospect either of requalifying in their profession or making a career change, hopefully into an occupation related to their training. Many people in this group, however, have not anticipated the difficulties they will face in requalifying to work in Canada, and encounter great disappointment when they try to get information about it. In a recent document, *Bridging the Gap: A Report of the Task Force on the Recognition of Foreign Qualifications*, the Government of Alberta (May, 1992) recognizes and describes many of the difficulties of the situation of immigrant professionals, both from the perspective of immigrants and of prospective employers, and recommends the establishment of an information centre to coordinate efforts for both groups. Further, the report recommends cooperation between educational institutions and agencies to develop differentiated English language training to support the profession-specific language needs of highly skilled workers (p.157).

Education and English

As an element of educational range, Figure 8 includes the proportion of clients, by highest year of education completed, who have learned some English before arriving in Canada. From the information in the figure, it is clear that those with more education are more likely to have studied some English, but it is difficult to estimate the actual correlation because of the varied sizes of the groups. Figure 9, however, has been adjusted so that each group is now the same size, a perspective which permits analysis of the relationship between education and pre-immigration opportunities to gain some English. In fact, the correlation between education and opportunities for English is quite strong. Few among those with little education have learned any English before coming to Canada. With more education, though, opportunities increase so that among those with 12 years of schooling, almost 60% arrived in Canada with some English. After 12 years, however, there seems to be little significant change in such opportunities, suggesting perhaps that much of the English learned in home countries may have been gained in high school. Canada truly owes a debt of gratitude to the

innumerable high school English teachers in countries around the world who have helped prepare their students for the experience of immigration.

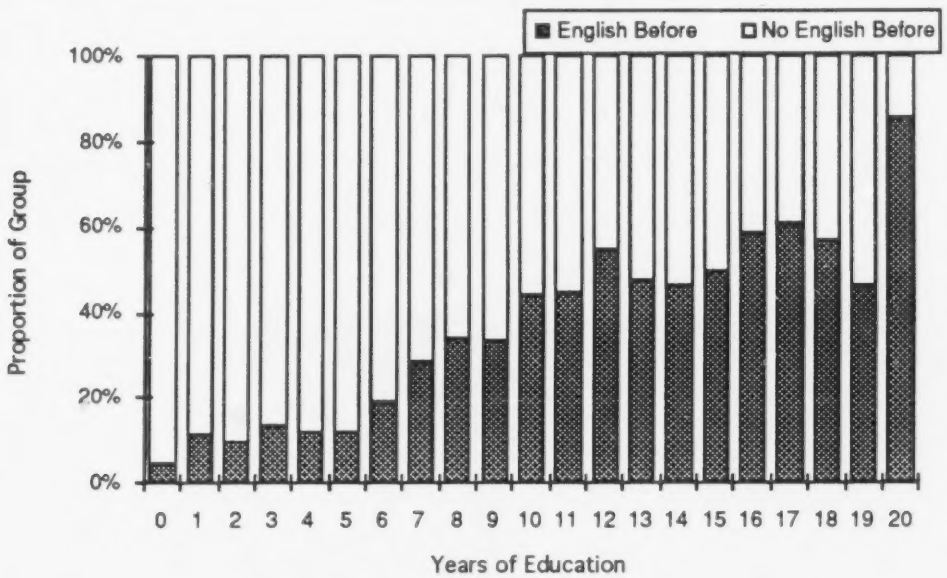

Figure 9. Language and Vocational Assessment Service: Formal Education as Correlated with Opportunities to Acquire English in Home Country

Registration by Mother Tongue

Figure 10 shows the breakdown of registration in terms of the ten largest language groups served. Three groups, the Vietnamese, Spanish and Cantonese, are considerably larger than the others, each representing 1000 or more clients. Polish clients, by contrast, represent fewer than 400 registrations, while those in the Mandarin, Persian and Arab communities number 200 or fewer. Khmer, Amharic and Tigrinya groups include only about 100 people each. By again including the dynamic of pre-immigration opportunities to learn English as an element of the analysis, however, we can gain some insights into the particular language needs of each group. Note that among Spanish speakers, only about 10% of registrants had any former English learning experience, while, among the Vietnamese and Cantonese speakers, about half had studied English before. Even with the comparison, the size of each of the subgroups without English in these large mother tongue populations is substantial, far outnumbering those in any other group.

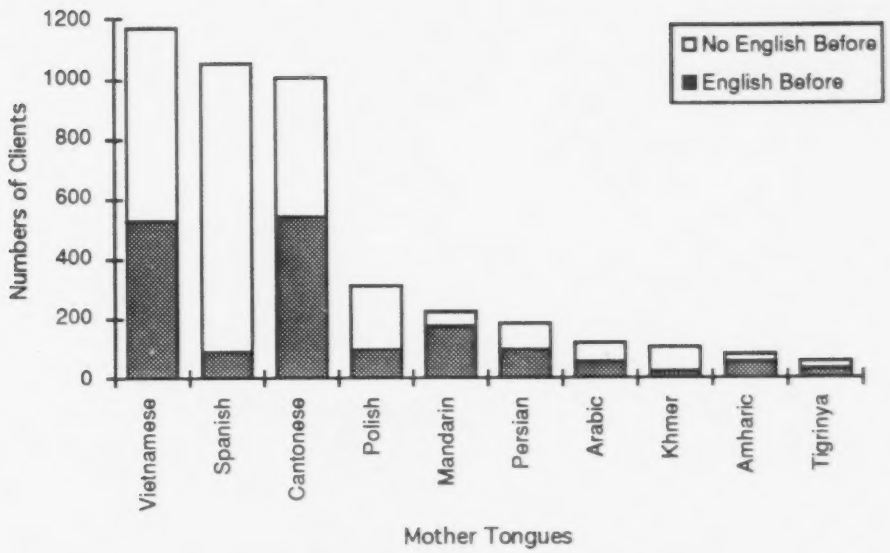

Figure 10. Language and Vocational Assessment Service: Registration by Mother Tongue - Indicating Proportion by Group With Some English Prior to Immigration

While Figure 10 is valuable in illustrating group size and pre-immigration experience with English, its insights into language learning generally should be regarded as partial. Among Spanish speakers, for example, few people had learned any English prior to immigration. We cannot tell, however, how many had studied any other second languages or how they learned them. French, Italian, Portuguese and German are very popular languages in South and Central America, but we cannot tell from the graph if the Spanish speakers have learned any of those languages. Similarly, other groups such as the Khmer, may have been exposed to languages other than English — perhaps Thai or a dialect of Chinese — but we are unable to say anything about that experience or how it might relate to the learning of a new language.

Another way of looking at this problem is to consider the annual rates of registration by various mother tongue groups. Figure 11 depicts this information for the period from 1988 to 1992. Spanish speakers, for example, represented the largest number of clients in 1988, with more than 350 registrants. Since that time, however, the number of Spanish speaking clients has continued to decline, so that, by 1992, they represented fewer than 150 (down from a high of 360). Alberta Immigration and Settlement (1992, p.15) observe that immigration from Central and South America declined from 15.5%of total arrivals in 1986 to about 10% in 1990.

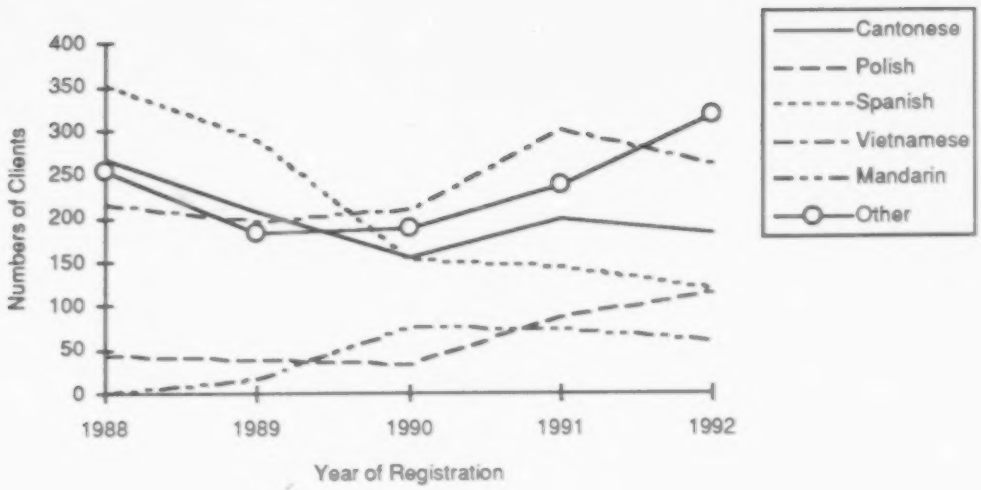

Figure 11. Language and Vocational Assessment Service: Registration Levels by Mother Tongue

Vietnamese registration, on the other hand, was steadily about 200 until 1991, when it increased by about 100 persons. The increase in Vietnamese participation appears to have declined slightly since that time, although it remains above earlier levels. The Vietnamese continue to be among the largest immigrating groups, 1437 persons in 1990 (Alberta Immigration and Settlement, 1992, p.18), although their numbers have fallen dramatically from levels ten years previous, at the peak of the Vietnamese refugee exodus.

Cantonese registration (including persons from Hong Kong, Southern China and Vietnam) has risen and fallen slightly across the years, but remains fairly steady in terms of proportion of clients in the service. This number should actually have increased if it were following the trends in immigration from Hong Kong, where 2538 persons emigrated to Alberta in 1990. That numbers among that group have not increased greatly may suggest that the majority of new arrivals from Hong Kong have sufficient English to access mainstream educational services. A factor to consider, though, is that many recent Hong Kong arrivals are Business Class immigrants and, as such, have the finances and obligation to begin working right away. They do not face, as a group, the same kinds of struggles as many other immigrants.

At the same time, Polish registrations have gradually increased from very few in 1988 to about 150 in 1992. Mandarin registrations (persons from countries such as the People's Republic of China, Taiwan, some Malaysians and some Chinese from

Brunei) increased in 1990, following the Tiananmen Square incident in Beijing, but have begun to taper off since then. The ubiquitous "other" category includes among its larger mother tongue groups Persian or Farsi speakers; Khmer speakers; groups from the Horn of Africa, including those speaking Amharic, Tigrinya, and Somali; and Arabic speakers. Registrations among this group declined slightly around 1990, but have since increased quite steadily, so that they now outnumber all other groups. Many of these groups are fairly new in Canada and lack the support networks of more established groups such as the Polish and Chinese. It is perhaps for this reason that they are more likely users of services like LVA.

Figure 12 (Registrations by Mother Tongue Proficiency) illustrates the implications of these changes. Looking at the largest groups only, we can still see the trend toward large numbers of people in each group at the 3.0 level, representing those with about seven to nine years of education (see Appendix 2). This pattern is clearly evident for the Vietnamese and Cantonese, where numbers rise dramatically to the 3.0 level, and then drop off almost as quickly. There are more than twice as many Vietnamese speakers with a 3.0 rating in mother tongue as there are with 5.0 (post-secondary proficiency). Among Cantonese speakers, differences are only slightly less dramatic. Among Polish, Mandarin and Persian speakers, however, we see a two peaked pattern, with similar numbers of registrants at the 3.0 and 5.0 levels (ie. Grades 7 to 9 and post-secondary levels).

These patterns illustrate a need for academic upgrading among large numbers of registrants if they are to participate in much of the adult and vocation educational currently available. This is in addition to the general need for English evidenced in Figure 14. Such conclusions, of course, are based on an assumption that newcomers can and will participate in mainstream adult education and that such programming is available to them. Further, that the information drawn upon is based upon the clientele of a counselling programme directed toward education and employment and not a sample from the general population indicates the high level of motivation for change among the group. The study population is self-selected for participation. By extension, one only needs to consider the implications of these findings for the whole spectrum of immigrants in the community.

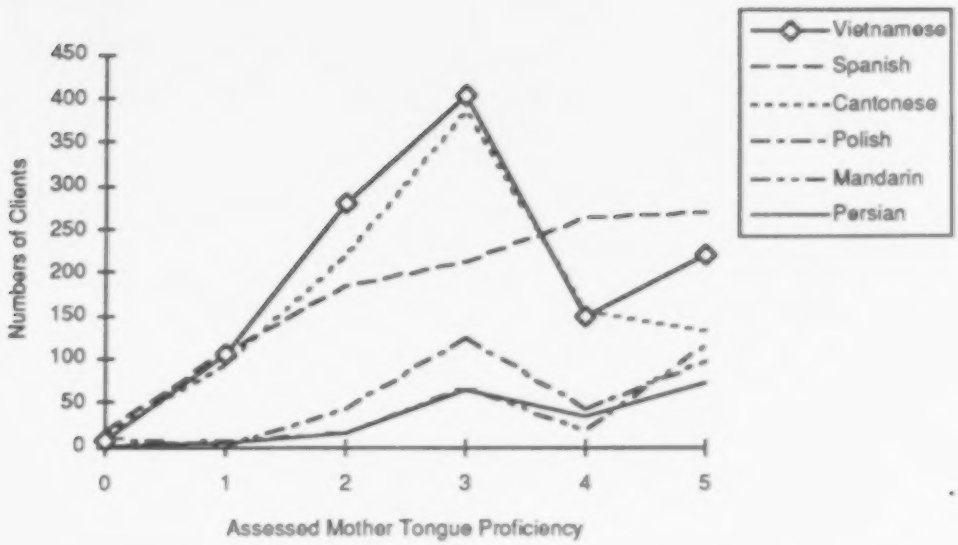

Figure 12. Language and Vocational Assessment Service: Registration Levels by Assessed Mother Tongue Proficiency (refer to Appendix 2 for assessment rating scale)

Has mother tongue proficiency changed among registrants over the time surveyed? Insights into this question may be gained by consulting Figure 13 (Assessed Mother Tongue Proficiency of Clients by Registration Year). The graph shows that significant change has taken place since 1988, when those with limited literacy (0 or 1 rating) accounted for about 25%of the total. At that time, those with basic literacy skills (3 rating) made up the largest group, about 33%and those with good to excellent literacy skills together accounting for the balance. There was a steady increase in the proportion of registrants with higher literacy skills in the next two years, in spite of a decline in overall enrollment. In 1991, however, we begin to see this trend reverse as numbers of clients with low to basic literacy in mother tongue increase in numbers (together with overall registrations), and those with more literacy begin to decline. By 1992, the trend is even more developed, so that those with limited literacy (0 – 2 rating) make up fully half of all registrations. Those with fair literacy skills (3 rating), as in 1988, again account for about 33%of clients, and those with good to excellent skills decline dramatically to a tiny fraction of the whole. It appears that the clientele of the service is changing somewhat, and that less educated newcomers are registering in larger numbers for assistance.

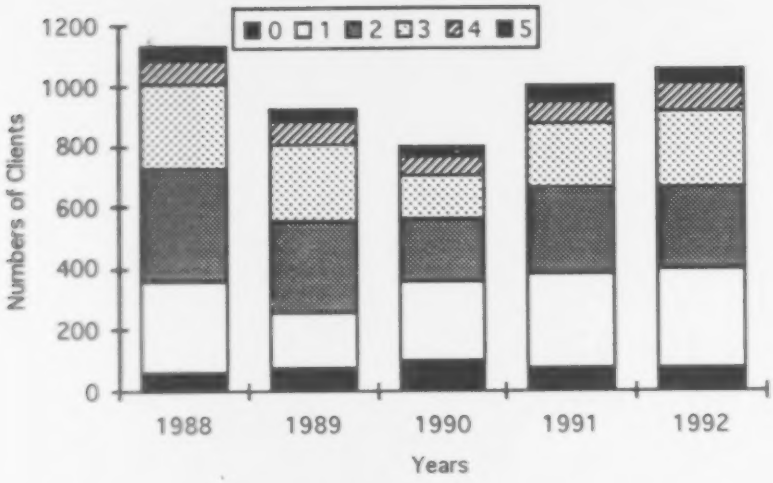

Figure 13. Language and Vocational Assessment Service: Assessed Mother Tongue Proficiency of Clients by Registration Year (refer to Appendix 2 for rating scale)

Mother Tongue vs English Language Proficiency

Curiously, the type of profile change suggested by Figure 13 (Assessed Mother Tongue Proficiency of Clients by Registration Year) is not reflected in assessments of English language proficiency. In fact, in Figure 14 (Registration by Year Indicating Distribution of English Proficiency), it appears that the proportions of clients by proficiency level have remained fairly constant across all registration years. The number of clients with an assessed level of 0, or no English have remained almost the same. Those with a rating of 1, or as having some basic English, seem to have increased slightly in their representation over the years 1989 to 1992, while those with a rating of 2 (those with some vocabulary and simple grammar) have declined slightly since 1989. Those at the intermediate and advanced levels (levels 3 to 5) are increasing in numbers.

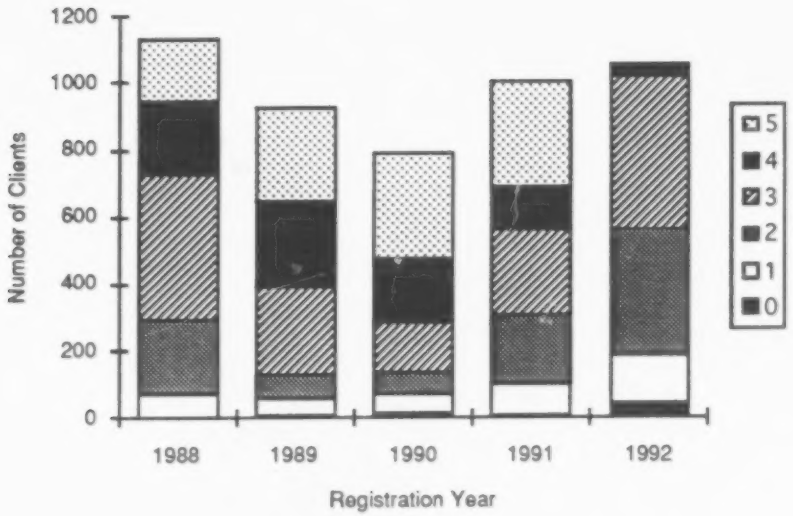

Figure 14. Language and Vocational Assessment Service: Assessed English Proficiency of Clients by Registration Year (refer to Appendix 3 for Rating Scale)

The unexpected difference between mother tongue assessments and those for English language proficiency may be, in part, an artifact of the assessment practices of the LVA counsellors and educators generally. Assessment of mother tongue skills is usually measured by looking at a client's reading comprehension and writing ability. English language proficiency, on the other hand, is a measure weighted heavily toward oral production and listening comprehension. Clients who can speak easily and confidently about their experience and goals are likely to score high in English proficiency while their corresponding reading and writing skills in no way compare with abilities in the mother tongue. Thus, although it appears that some clients actually have scored higher in English than in their own language, we must take into account the particular bias of the tests themselves.

Educational Attainment

By looking at the distribution of educational attainment (Figure 15) for each year of registration, we can verify some of the observations made about mother tongue and English language proficiency. Figure 15 more closely resembles the profile of mother tongue proficiency (Figure 13) than it does English ability. Even so, there are differences. It appears that some clients, particularly in 1988 and 1991, were scored higher in mother tongue proficiency than their years of education

would indicate. Such a discrepancy could be attributable to literacy skills gained in activities outside of formal education. Alternatively, it could be linked to the perceptions of the counsellor who does the testing. With several counsellors doing tests of different languages, however, the influence of individual ratings should be reduced. The effect of out of school learning on mother tongue literacy provides a more plausible rationale for the difference. It appears that many people have continued to read and develop their literacy skills on their own after leaving school.

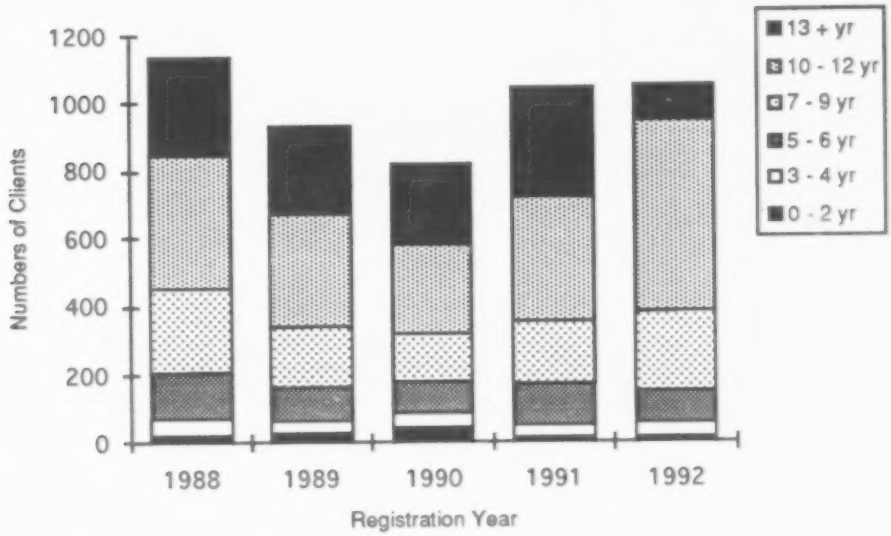

Figure 15. Language and Vocational Assessment Service: Client Registrations by Educational Attainment

Looking at Figures 13, 14, and 15, for the year 1992, however, presents a different scenario. Figure 13 (Mother Tongue Proficiency) shows a profile which has changed considerably from previous years. It seems that fewer clients with high levels of mother tongue proficiency registered. This can be cross-checked by looking at Figure 15 (Educational Attainment). Figure 15 shows some support for the suggestion that the clientele of LVA is changing somewhat, although it seriously challenges the degree of change illustrated in Figure 13. It does appear that, in 1992, LVA received larger numbers of clients with twelve years of education or less. Those with some post secondary education declined by more than half compared with the previous year.

These observations should be regarded with caution since significant change is only indicated for 1992. LVA staff will have to wait to look at information for 1993

before they will be able to determine if the 1992 figures represent an anomaly in the pattern established in earlier years or, in fact, if a trend is emerging. In any case, the 1992 figures for education reveal several questions about what did happen. We know that numbers of clients compared with 1991 were fairly comparable. We know that proportions of newcomers by educational grouping have not changed significantly. Have other community resources begun to respond to the needs of newcomers with higher education? Are recent newcomers with higher education from source countries which do not typically access LVA services? Are services from LVA more successfully meeting the needs of an increasing number of newcomers looking for academic upgrading and vocational training? At this time, there is insufficient information to answer such questions.

Occupational Change

Tables 1 and 2 concern occupations of the clientele of LVA. Table 1 describes occupations in the home country while Table 2 reveals those most common in Canada. This information should be regarded somewhat cautiously since its documentation has been somewhat problematic. Counsellors, who are already pressed for time, must scan a two page list of categories for a code to match the occupation given by the client. If they simply write in the name of the occupation without the code, the computer operator in another office will usually enter it simply as "other", resulting in a rather large meaningless category called "other".

Occupation	Cases	MeanYrs.Ed.	SD
student	848	10.9	2.8
no occupation	314	8.3	3.9
homemaker	256	7.3	3.7
teacher	250	13.6	3.0
sales/business	220	9.6	3.5
clerical	192	12.2	1.9
seamstress	178	8.5	2.8
self-employed	144	7.6	3.5
farm worker	118	5.5	4.3
mechanic	114	10.5	3.3
accountant	93	13.3	2.2
electrical tech.	92	11.6	2.8
engineer	90	14.6	2.7
factory worker	85	8.9	3.3
welder	63	9.5	2.6

Table 1. Language and Vocational Assessment Service: Fifteen most Common Occupations in Home Country

Occupation	Cases	MeanYrs.Ed.	SD
no occupation	2314	10.5	4.0
labourer	401	9.5	3.5
janitor	335	9.3	3.9
cook	151	9.6	3.5
factory worker	137	9.8	3.3
student	115	12.3	3.3
custodian/housekeeper	114	11.2	3.6
seamstress	99	9.5	2.7
daycare worker	59	12.5	3.1
baker	54	9.8	3.2
sales/business	50	11.5	2.8
waitress	42	11.2	2.9
welder	39	9.5	2.7
machine operator	37	10.5	2.5
babysitter	35	10.6	3.7

Table 2. Language and Vocational Assessment Service: Fifteen Most Common Occupations in Canada

From the information available, however, note that "student" is the largest category of response for occupation in home country. This is interesting in view of the amount of time clients claimed to have been away from school in Figure 5 (Time Since Last Schooling), but it is not unpredictable, considering the large proportion of refugees included in the population. Students, and schools generally, are a common target for attack in movements for political change. It is likely that many students spent time out of school in their countries and several years as refugees before coming to Canada.

For a more detailed picture of the formal education relating to these occupations, consult Table 1 (Mean Education — Fifteen Top Occupations in Home Country). In this table, some insights are revealed into the complex nature of occupational transfer. In the case of mechanics, for example, the mean years of education is 10.5, somewhat below that of a journeyman mechanic in Canada. It should be considered, though, that some mechanics may not have counted on-the-job apprenticeship as additional years of schooling. An additional problem is that the global term "mechanic" actually covers all aspects of working with machines. Mechanics' training varies considerably from country to country. (And sometimes from city to country!) Thus the counsellor may interview two "mechanics", and one may have learned to fix cars in his uncle's garage, the other may have apprenticed in a system similar to Canada's. Both, however, may consider themselves mechanics.

The same problem of interpretation is common in many other occupations, as is evident in the figure. The mean education for teachers, for example, is 13.6 years, indicating that some teachers have completed only basic education while others hold degrees. The occupations of accountant, engineer, electrical technician and welder reveal similar scenarios. The issue of requalification in Canada thus becomes quite complex and inevitably involves some degree of vocational upgrading or retraining.

What about occupational experience in Canada? Information provided by LVA clients includes all jobs held since their arrival (there are three spaces for this question). Again, I stress caution because of the problems of collecting and reporting this information, but direct you to Table 2 (Fifteen Most Common Occupations in Canada) for a view of this situation. Here we see, not unpredictably, that almost half of the LVA population (2316 persons) claim to have no occupation in Canada. This is not surprising given that 65.5%of clients are unemployed at the time of registration. Many of these people will be new workers (including women who have not worked outside the family) or will be contemplating their first job in Canada.

The range of occupations making up the rest of the top fifteen, however, is largely limited to labour and service oriented work. These are not jobs which are highly education dependent. Nor does the list of occupations show much resemblance to that in Table 1 (Top Fifteen Occupations in Home Country). The number of people claiming student status has shrunk from 849 in the home country to 115 in Canada. There are 118 farmers who now live in a city. The categories of janitor, daycare worker, waitress and custodian/housekeeper appear only in the Canadian information. Of course, immigrants traditionally fill service and labour positions when they first arrive in Canada, and that is what is reflected in Table 2. Yet, at the same time, it makes one wonder about the possibilities for this group and the process of moving beyond such jobs. Also, what are the implications for concomitant changes in social and political life? How does such change occur, and what is the role of education in the process?

English Proficiency and Length of Residence

The final investigation of this study concerns the correlation between overall English proficiency and length of residence in Canada. A common assumption is that there is a strong correlation between English proficiency and time in Canada. This kind of logic, unfortunately, is built upon the assumption that, if you are in Alberta (in English-speaking Canada), you are speaking English. It is the same assumption supporting the idea that if more English classes are provided, more English will be learned.

Figure 16, however, reveals what has actually happened to the clients of LVA in terms of learning English in Canada. From the figure, we can see that newcomers (those in Canada four years or less) are represented in large numbers across the six categories of proficiency (from 0 to 5). Among those in their fifth or sixth year, fewer people have a zero level of proficiency; the other five categories each contain more than 36 individuals.

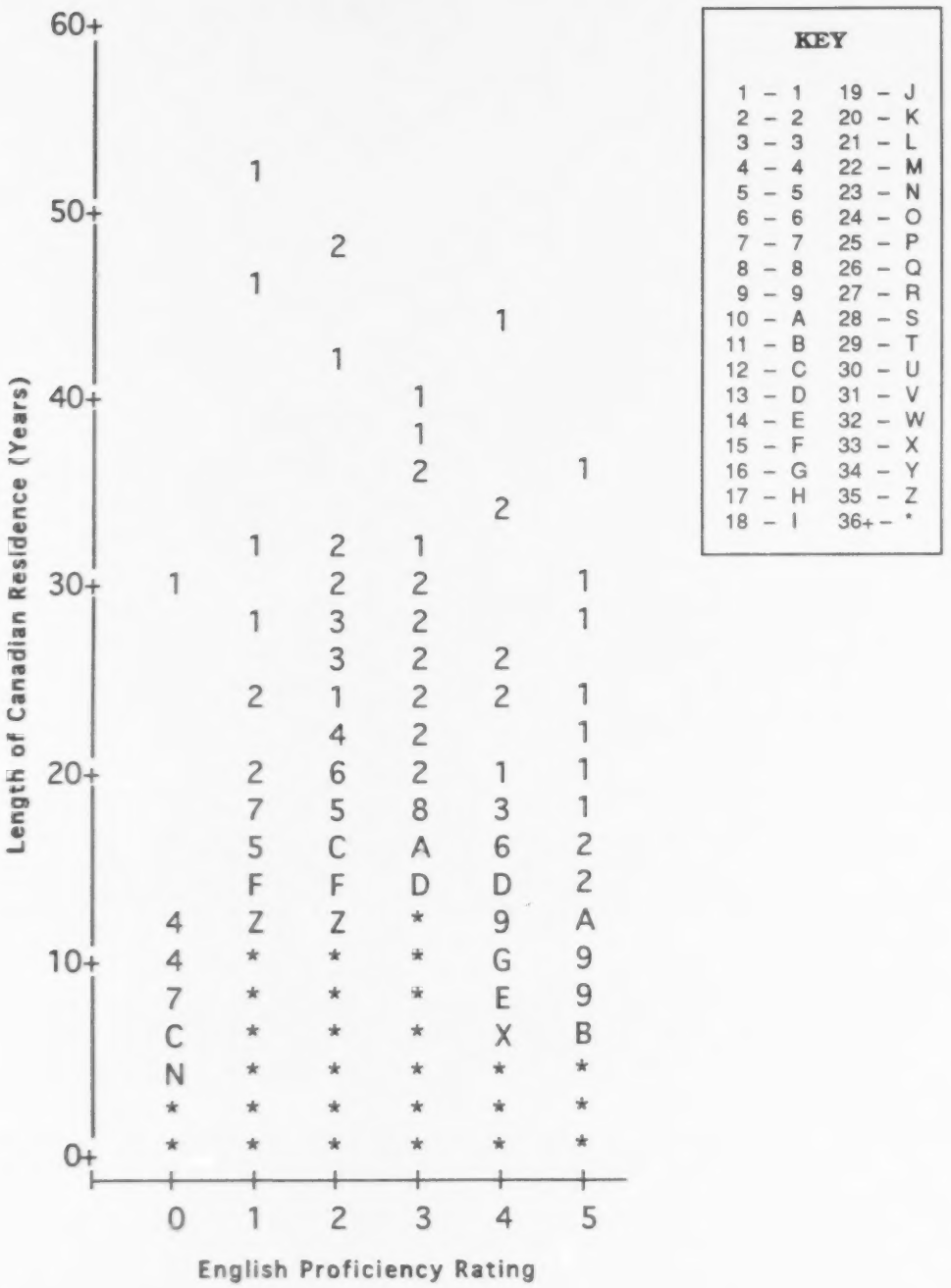

Figure 16. Language and Vocational Assessment Service: Distribution of English Proficiency by Length of Canadian Residence (refer to Appendix 3 for rating scale)

By the seventh year, the situation is beginning to change. While there are only seven individuals registering with no English, there are also fewer scoring a 4 or 5 in English proficiency. This may mean that highly proficient, long term residents are now going elsewhere for counselling or that their adaptation problems have been resolved. Nonetheless, Figure 16 identifies a sizeable number of people, nearly half of total registrations, with limited English skills (ratings of 1 to 3) who continue to request counselling, and in all likelihood, referrals to English courses. This same trend continues to include those with ten or more years of residence.

Registrations drop sharply among those with more than ten years residence. Still a pattern of demand does continue among longer term residents. Approximately 40 to 50 requests for assistance from longer term residents rated only 1 to 3 (very basic English to low intermediate) are received every year. **There continues to be a sizeable group of immigrants which does not become highly proficient in English, even after ten or more years in Canada.** Among those that are coming into LVA for counselling, it is fair to presume that many are still seeking English classes, frustrated by their inability to gain information about the society in which they live, isolated from those beyond the borders of their own cultural community. Some of these people could have been working in kitchens, in garment factories, in the home, or doing janitorial work where they had no opportunity or incentive to use English. It may be only after they are laid off, injured on the job, divorced or retired that they come forward for assistance.

The LVA Clientele in the Context of Canadian Adult Education — Some Observations Regarding Experience

Based on the foregoing analysis of variables in the client database, what general observations can be made about the kinds of participation expected among this group of learners? Further, what insights about possible educational needs have been uncovered? To address these questions, I suggest some synthesis of the elements analyzed.

The clientele of the Language and Vocational Assessment Service at Catholic Social Services is diverse and changing, representing individuals from Asia, Eastern Europe, Africa, South and Central America and the Middle East. Major language groups include Spanish, Vietnamese and Cantonese, with additional participation from Mandarin, Persian, Khmer and Arab communities. About a thousand clients register each year, asking for assistance with educational and vocational planning. Participation by men and women is roughly equivalent, but slightly more women do register for help.

Of these clients, the greatest portion is refugees, people with few community supports in Edmonton. Individuals in the family and assisted relative classes make up the next largest group. A major reason for registering with the programme appears to be the need for help in making necessary connections in the community since 65%of all clients are unemployed. Getting up-to-date and accurate information about opportunities for education and employment is obviously a need and a problem for this group. The coordinated efforts of the LVA programme are much in demand among those who know about their services.

Clients are most likely to register within their first five years in Canada, although there continues to be some demand for counselling from people in Canada twenty years or more. The LVA records provide evidence that much of this ongoing demand relates to the needs of longterm residents who have not, for whatever reason, achieved fluency in English. The needs of this group are not well researched or understood. Most government-funded programming directed toward immigrants is aimed at settlement type language needs. It is unlikely that the same programmes will suit those who have already settled and have contributed to the Canadian economy for many years. These people understand the basics of getting along in Canada. They need more help at getting into Canadian life.

In looking at a programme dedicated to providing educational counselling, I was not expecting to find that a majority of clients have been away from formal learning situations for seven or more years. Of course this finding relates, in part, to the large numbers of refugees who participate, but it suggests that a return to classroom learning will, for many, be a struggle. These are people who have already accepted family responsibilities, have held some sort of job, have established particular ways of interacting in the world. The largest number have about twelve years of education, although some may have received apprenticeship or on-the-job training after schooling. Such people have the advantage of being very flexible, compared with their professionally-trained countrymen, in the process of adaptation to employment. They have not already invested many years in academic preparation, and they are less likely to suffer mental anguish at the very real prospect of retraining and job change.

A smaller, but sizeable number of people have received nine or fewer years of education in their home countries. For these people, there is a variety of responses to the prospect of returning to school. For some, particularly among young people, it is an opportunity which they relish, one which has been withheld too long. For others, however, the prospect of classrooms, English-speaking teachers, homework and examinations is extremely daunting. They may register for community ESL classes, but it is unlikely that they will learn much there. For some men

particularly, the loss of status and the posture of compliance required for the successful classroom learning will be an unacceptable compromise. Given the current range of educational options, many would prefer to remain outside, keep looking for a job and maintain their dignity.

In terms of numbers, professionals and aspiring professionals (those with some post secondary education prior to arrival) represent about 25%of the total population studied. Compared with other learners, this group's members are more likely versed in strategies for getting attention and help, more articulate in stating their cases. At the same time, their investment in education has already been great. These people are looking for training which will allow them, as quickly as possible, to qualify for the same or a similar credential, and to begin working.

Those with more education are likely to have studied some English before coming to Canada. This simple correlation is misleading because it suggests that those with the most English will have the fewest problems in adaptation. As shown, however, there are different kinds of adjustment problems to be faced, regardless of level of education — low (0 to 9 years, medium (10 to 12 years) or high (post secondary). It is impossible to judge the interaction between level of English and quality of adjustment made. Quantitative information such as that addressed by my study cannot hope to address questions of the quality of individual efforts to adapt to life in Canada.

The profile suggests a similar spectrum of educational concerns among immigrants as is expected among Canadian-born adults: from adult basic education to job training to post secondary study, from citizenship education to community development to hobby pursuits. This can be inferred, in part, from the broad age range of participants — 18 years to senior citizens, from the information concerning length of residence of clients (from 0 to 30+ years), as well as considering the place of counselling in the lives of people occupied with a project of change. Immigrants are, by definition, involved in such a project. They are not seeking to become merely economic units in Canada's economy but rather, they are looking for a place for themselves within the community which surrounds them. Efforts to link success in adaptation to economic indicators (ie. equating ESL courses with job preparation, combining ESL courses with job training) have done little to address the human problems of our increasingly culturally-diverse communities.

Chapter 5 – Immigrants and Adult Education: Four Stories

In this chapter, you will be introduced to four people who have chosen to leave their homelands for the security and opportunity afforded by a new country. I had thought about undertaking such a project for many years, through conversations with immigrant students in English classes and in the ESL Resource Centre. It seemed to me that there were many Canadians — including teachers — who had very little understanding of the lives of immigrants, very little appreciation of the skills and values which immigrants can contribute to our collective well-being. The idea of documenting some of the stories was not born, however, until I began working as a counsellor with the LVA at Catholic Social Services in Edmonton.

My intended goal in undertaking this project was to engage several clients of that programme in conversations about their experience as immigrants and the role of adult education in facilitating their adjustment to life in Canada. At that time I was thinking about the context of each person's experience more as a backdrop to the work than anything else. I could not have understood how the stories would speak to me, as an educator, about the shape of a world characterized by change and the challenge of finding a place for oneself through a process characterized alternately by risk-taking and biding one's time, moderated by a hope for something better.

I do not intend that the experience of all newcomers to Canada be extrapolated from these four stories. These individuals have not been chosen as representatives of that heterogenous, shifting group called immigrants. Having said this, however, I also know that aspects of each of these stories are echoed in the lives of thousands of people across Canada. In discussions with counsellors and learners, I heard over and over again quavering affirmations, shared smiles of comprehension and acknowledgment. Why does this new work have the feeling of something so old?

What does education mean in the context of the multiplex change which characterizes not only an immigrant's world, but our own, as well? As humanity braces to meet the end of the west's twentieth century, news of economic change — unemployment, retraining, rethinking the place of work — assaults our eyes and ears daily through the news media. Economic change is correlated with technological change — the promise of a better quality of life and increased

efficiency in production and communication. What is the place of the individual within such a scenario? An ever-increasing number of people in the world are finding the circumstances of their lives altered by war and persecution, change in their economic and political system, the hollow numbness of unemployment, environmentally-induced disease. They are alienated from the known, irresistably attracted to the unknown.

In many ways, Canadians are luckier than most people in the world. They live in relative physical and social security; they feel far away from danger even if they live their lives planning for what they cannot know. Yet it is in the shared space defined by change which offers the opportunity for immigrants and Canadians to learn from each other, to learn about each other. From the margins of a common unknown, we can share our own experiences and learn about those of others. The curriculum of such an education is situated at a place where all become learners, all teachers.

It has been a challenge for me to maintain the colour of the many conversations in which I have participated, and to render these four stories in a manner which permits the reader to engage, at some level, not only with the narrative, but with some textural characteristics presented by cultural and language difference. Unlike the video format, paper and ink lack the immediacy of visual presentation of subjects, but presents a more detailed picture of experience. To ensure participant confidentiality, however, the print medium was preferred for this project. After eliminating almost all sensory aspects of our interviews, what remains of the elusive extralinguistic features? I have tried to retain the character of the language of our exchanges, have left much of grammar and word choice intact, indicated pronunciation variation where the meaning of individual words became focal. You may find that your eye strays back, from time to time, across a phrase to verify its intent. Consider, at that moment, the ongoing process of negotiation between the narrator and the scribe — the search for common terminology, a way to explain and to be understood.

Throughout my time as a teacher and counsellor working with immigrants, it is this very level of difficulty in communication which has caused me the most chagrin. In a mixed group with fairly fluent English learners and native-born Canadians, an immigrant will speak to ask a question or make an observation. Often, however, the response of the Canadian-born person is to turn toward me for an interpretation of what they just heard rather than engaging directly with the speaker. In some way, I hope to address the possibility of that connection with these words and images.

Those who shared their stories have spent considerable time with me this year: about five hours of interviews, ten hours discussing the story and the transcripts, plus an equivalent amount of time sharing current experiences and ideas. Jan, a psychologist from Poland, commented that I now know more about his recent life than his own mother! Each person has taken the time to meet and talk and read with me over a period of months, spoken openly as I taped our interviews, patiently checked the transcripts and listened to my questions and observations about his or her experiences.

The process of the stories was not straightforward. It became enmeshed in the rhythms of people's lives as they experienced job changes, family adjustments, car accidents, crime. Anticipated dates for completing the stories were pushed back. We continued to meet and to talk. The expectations of the interview process itself stood as a potential barrier to this project. In spite of my experience in counselling and teaching, the goal of identifying something of significance in the conversations loomed large as I began. My ability to listen was sometimes impaired by intentionality. It was only the subtle looks and gentle redirection of my co-researchers that gave me the confidence to relax and to open to their words. Their confidence was my inspiration.

In this chapter, it is my pleasure to introduce you to four clients of the LVA. Each of them has chosen a pseudonym: two opting for first name only, the other two selecting both first and last names. First, I present Azar Bahman who is now a Canadian, although originally from Iran. Her story tells of the struggle for education in a climate of political repression before coming to Canada, and of another kind of struggle for education in Canada: Azar found it difficult to learn and use a new alphabet when she arrived here. Next, you will meet Jan, a decidedly professional Polish (and Canadian) man. Jan arrived in Canada in a very unorthodox manner and, in his story, he describes his experiences in trying to rejoin the professional class in Canada. Dave follows Jan. He is a young Vietnamese (and Canadian) man who trained and worked as a physics teacher in his own country before leaving to try to establish a new home for his family. Dave speaks about his experience as an immigrant and student in a Canadian technical school. Finally, you will meet Amy Sham, an older woman who arrived in Canada as an investor from Hong Kong. Many people seem to think that for those with money, reestablishing in a new place should be no problem. Amy, however, faces many of the same difficulties of other women her age: she is attempting a career change, she has inadequate background on which to make informed decisions, she is unsure of herself in a new place. All four of the participants have been, aspire to or continue to be students in adult education programmes in Edmonton.

Thinking about the Stories

I had thought about other methodologies for this section of the work. At first, I thought that the participants themselves might be interested in writing their own stories. This could have been managed as a writing workshop or with individual journals. Then, I wondered about a collaborative writing process. Finally, however, I realized that, with this group, such considerations were purely academic. Each of the four worked and carried family responsibilities. They may have liked the idea of writing, but, practically speaking, they did not have time to commit to such a process. In the end, I opted for the efficiency and flexibility afforded by open-ended interviews. Using this process, participants were free to contribute both to the content and direction of the work, and to edit out things they wish they hadn't said or add things they really wanted to say.

You will find each of the stories detailed in its own way. After I had worked through all of the stories with the participants, I thought for a long time about what kind of analysis would do justice to them and to the ideas they had expressed. My experience has been that people attend to and remember stories far better than they do expository accounts on the same subject. Furthermore, I felt that any attempt to explain what had really happened to each person would result in a repetition of the problem identified earlier: I would be interpreting between the teller and the reader. For that reason, I have resisted further analysis of the stories than each storyteller has offered.

As the common participant and recorder in all of the interviews, however, I do appear at points throughout the stories. Sometimes, I reflect on a point I have just heard. At other times, I interject with questions that come to mind about a particular point in the story. I am listening, not only for myself, but I am thinking about other readers. Through reflections, I try to connect the storyteller's experience with my own. Through questions, I steer the direction of the stories toward the experience of adult education. Variety in the style of my participation also results from the kind of interaction which develops during the interviews. Some storytellers have a way of inviting the listener into their world while others are more solitary both in their travels and their thoughts..

I have taken time with the aesthetics of presentation in the hope that you will linger with each of these individuals and listen to their words. In the end, analysis of the situation of these four newcomers and others like them must be done here by each reader, and as they encounter immigrants among their neighbours, their students, their in-laws, their friends.

Azar Bahman

Azar Bahman smiles at me across teacups and a bowl of fruit, her home a calm oasis in a sea of noise. Outside her window, sirens scream to clear the busy street, trucks roar by; upstairs, a dull pulse of vintage rock music penetrates the floor. A lazy stream of smoke drifts across from the corner where Azar's husband, Mahmoud, now sits, observing. There has been quite a debate lately between him and Azar about moving away from this place. He, however, remains firm in his commitment to this, their first Canadian home. No moving until they are both securely employed. An incentive, perhaps, for each to strive harder than they already have.

The tone is comfortable, friendly, but I begin to worry about how my project will affect it, how inserting my tape recorder and questions into the middle of this space will change the talk among us.

"Laura. Have some more fruit." Azar's reassurance brings me back into the room. It's time to begin.

From her story, it becomes clear to me that Azar's is the life of a survivor, both in her native Iran and in Canada. From her earliest memories of Tehran, the images are those of struggle and of loss. Her mother's early death meant that Azar took on large responsibilities for child care and housekeeping at a very young age. Her father maintained his business as a perfumer in a tiny shop, but he was also troubled by ill health. His death, when Azar was fourteen, meant an end to regular schooling for her, forever.

She had started to work before he died, anxious to provide support to her dad. She was twelve, but she took a job after school in a drug store, selling cosmetics. "Extra classes at night," she told her family. Her father looked at her because he saw she was never at home and always very tired, and he was suspicious. One day, he followed her from school to the shop where she worked. Inside he saw her change her clothes and start to work. He remained outside.

A short while later, a co-worker told Azar she had seen a very strange thing. A man had stood outside the store, crying, for more than half an hour, before he finally left and went home. Azar felt sad, and thought that maybe, in

some way, she had reminded the stranger of his daughter. She did not even think about her own father.

At nine, after she finished work, she returned home to find her father waiting for her at the door. He hugged her, crying "You must be a boy for me, not a girl. Why are you working? I don't need your money." Azar looked at her father, and suddenly realized what had actually happened that day. There was no way to pretend any more.

Only two brief years later, her father's death meant an end to regular schooling for Azar. Instead, she worked during the day at the drug store, and took high school courses at night, hoping to continue her education. She continued to care for her younger brother and sister. I asked Azar about opportunities in Iran for young people who must leave school, and she told me that many of them became thieves or prostitutes. They were actively recruited by adults who used drugs and alcohol to lure them into an "easy" life. Azar remembered her father's counselling and kept on working and studying, hoping for a better life.

As our conversation continued, I was surprised how often the subject turned to luck, both good and bad. There are many possible ways to interpret the meaning of a particular path taken, but for Azar a dominant theme in life has been chance — chance that her father died at an early age and chance that she met the owner of that drug store. How can you plan your life around chance? In a decidedly western way I tried to consider alternative interpretations for the outcomes as Azar described them. Even as I did so, I began to understand that, for many people in the world, and increasingly for those in the west, chance is all that can be counted on. Planning becomes impossible in a world characterized almost completely by change.

Sociologists talk about western culture as typified by individualism, of flexibility and responsiveness to change while traditional societies are often characterized by a more communal orientation, an adherence to ritual and tradition. As Azar's story continued to unfold, I began to think about the inflexibility inflicted by individualism — our regulation by schedules and personal calendars, the tyranny of individual achievement, our thoughtless commitment to the empty platitudes of equal opportunity, human rights and democracy.

"More tea?"

"How did you decide to leave your country?" It's a presumptuous question, I know, but one it seems I must have asked every immigrant I've worked with. Azar simply smiles, and continues.

The drug store owner was a very kind man. He offered Azar a raise every six months. Then one day he asked, "What do you want to do in your future?" Azar thought, and replied that she dreamed of a career in medicine, but that she was not sure it was possible, given her financial situation. He urged her to consider nursing because she could enter with her present qualifications, train for a year and get a good-paying job. In the meantime, she could continue to work part-time. And she did.

She liked the people in the hospital, but found she could not tolerate the shift work. After a year, she was looking for more training. She went to a vocational college in Tehran, looking for alternatives. In the office was a notice board advertising programme openings in hairdressing, sewing and teaching.

"Teaching?" I, a teacher by training, was reacting to this placement of teaching with vocations like sewing and hairdressing.

"Not teachers for the city. For the countryside!" It surprised me how easily Azar accepted this distinction.

She continued. "I knew I could pass the test because it's an easy test, but I didn't feel good about teaching. So, I chose hairdressing. Two more years of school for everything: face, manicure, pedicure, cutting hair, colour — everything!"

And what was she doing to support herself during this time? "I was still at the drug store," she laughs.

But her luck was about to change again. Increasing political pressure for social reform was mounting against the Shah, and any sign of protest became a reason for arrest. Azar's crime was reading a book critical of royalty. She was branded a terrorist and jailed without trial for an indeterminate term. No one in her family was notified. She tried to get a sense of the extent of punishment to expect. A fellow prisoner offered this advice: "Don't cry. You only read a book, that's all. Some people here just looked at a book, and they got ten years in jail. But maybe you will be lucky. After you go to jail and they talk to you, they might only give you five years. Some people stay here till they die. They kill those people because they read books."

I was trying to understand this brutal, but obviously educational experience in the discontinuity of Azar's life. I wondered about her fellow prisoners. Who were they?

"I saw lots of people from Armenia, but they go to a special jail," she offered. "There was a doctor, and one woman was a judge." The litany continued. "And nurses, and teachers — lots of teachers. We had over there before ten teachers in the jail."

I began to feel the dank obscurity of the place she described as I thought about my own outspokenness. I could not smugly admit to being untouched by my society, however. And I winced as she continued.

After six months, she was taken before a judge and officials for questioning. Again, she was asked about where she got the book. This time, though, she ignored the question and instead took off her clothes and to reveal the marks of her beatings. "My back was all black. They hit me with a cable. The marks were never gone during the six months I stayed there." Her brother-in-law had come to appeal to the judge for clemency. The judge looked at her back, and after a few more questions, she was released.

"You know, you can't go back to school now," the judge advised her.

"You couldn't?" At this point, I was questioning both my comprehension and the possibility of any further penalty.

"Yeah, because all of my papers were marked TERRORIST. I couldn't go back to school. They were afraid that I would teach other students."

She went back to the drug store to work while she investigated the possibility of college enrollment, but everywhere she went people looked at the red mark on her papers and said, "No, sorry. No, sorry." Azar began to realize that she would never have the chance for a full life in her own country. A brief three or four months later, she was on her way out of Iran and into a new life in Denmark.

* * *

Azar was not running, but she was seeking shelter — looking for a place to stop and think about who she was and where she was going. She was hoping to find good luck in a new place: Copenhagen. There were no hotel reservations waiting for her in Copenhagen, no prearranged assignments. Instead, Azar came

prepared with a temporary work visa, looking for an opportunity to work so that she could continue her education beyond the interdiction of Iran's leaders.

What is it about the call of anonymity that we find so alluring? Perhaps when the voices of others speaking about us become more real than our own, it is the only way for some people to survive. Attempt to define oneself in a new context. New paint, new clothes, new friends....new stories. What happens to the old, then, to one's forbidden past? Where does it go within the new? Discarded like some primitive and obsolete computer, or set in mothballs like my great aunt's badger coat? Obscurity, curiosity or what?

Azar and Mahmoud were engaged to be married at the time she left Iran. She didn't tell him why she was leaving. He didn't know what had happened to her. "I didn't want trouble, problems for other people. I just didn't tell him, and I said I wanted to go. And he said 'No, please let's get married.' And I said 'No, not now.' And I went to Denmark."

She anticipated an easy transition to this strange place. There was an uncle who had immigrated there ten years before. He had married a Danish woman and started a family. Still, he was her blood relative — her own father's brother — and she expected a family welcome from him. Instead, he met her at the airport and began her introduction to the country by laying out the limitations of his hospitality. She could stay at his family's house that night, but the next day she must look for her own place.

Azar wondered how her uncle, a member of her family, could talk to her like that. Still, she was in no position to argue. She smiled, and agreed to the terms, putting down her surprise to not knowing about Denmark or Danish people. How could she express her outrage to people with whom she could not even speak? She tried to keep in mind her goal of finding a place for herself, getting a job and to going to school. In her heart she felt a new kind of sadness and disappointment. But so what?

Her uncle helped her find a housekeeping room, and she moved in right away. In the evening, she began to take Danish classes. But she was lonely. She didn't know anyone and she didn't have a job. What was she waiting for?

"Hello. Are you new here?" Azar was surprised to realize the woman was talking to her. No one in the building talked to her.

She managed to reply "Ja," in her beginner's Danish, and to smile.

The woman did not go away. "Do you speak English?" she asked.

Now, Azar looked into the face of the stranger. She told her she could speak and understand a little English, and they began to talk. The woman's name was Hannah. She told Azar that she had been married to an American, that was how she had learned her English. Now her husband was gone, and she lived in this building with her daughter. Hannah offered to help Azar if she could. "Do you have a job?" she began....

Soon after that, Azar began working with Hannah in a carpet repair shop. They repaired cigarette burns, stains, and holes in all kinds of rugs. It was hard work, but the company of friends made it easier. Azar still studied in the evening, but now Hannah helped her with her lessons. It was easier to speak with people and to do things.

Iran grew further away as the time passed. Azar had been in Denmark almost a year! One day, she was talking with Hannah about her situation, wondering what to do next: her work visa was about to expire. "Azar," offered Hannah, "If you want a good place to work and a good place for school, you should go to Frankfurt. But don't go right to Frankfurt, go to Fulda. It's a small town 55 km. outside Frankfurt. You can get there by train." And Azar did.

I thought about this for a minute. Azar had decided to go to Fulda on the advice of that one woman. She knew no one there, and she had no particular destination when she got there. She just picked up her visa and went. This seemed to be trusting in chance too much, I thought. Even when I left Vancouver to go to Gold River, B.C., I would never have done it without having a job to go to. (Without having the luxury of a job to go to, you spoiled Canadian! Why do you think you understand the workings of the world better than Azar? Have you never been a hitch hiker before?)

Azar was looking at me, curious what I was thinking about. A plate of chilled watermelon had appeared on the table during my mental absence, and I took the opportunity to comment on it as a way to return to the dialogue. Azar laughed at my awkwardness, and told me she learned a lot about fruit while she was in Germany. She continued her story.

"There is a very small train that goes to Fulda from Frankfurt. The first day, I went there from Frankfurt, I went to a hotel. Actually, not a hotel, but the same as.....because every small towns don't have a big hotel." And I went in and I asked, because now I spoke a little German, if they had a room for me. They told

me that upstairs they have a place for people coming to study, to go to school or something like that. Same as a pension."

"The first day I was there, I saw a man from my country, from Iran, at the inn. I asked for an application at the desk, and he looked at me and asked where I was from. I told him I was from Iran and he said he was very pleased to meet me. He told me that he was a doctor, a professor in the Catholic hospital in Fulda. He asked me what I wanted to do in Fulda, so I told him I wanted to work and go to school. I told him I didn't have any people to help me with money. He signed my application, and they gave me work in the hospital — not as a nurse, but in the kitchen. They gave me a good salary, though, enough for rent, tuition, books and everything."

"What about the fruit?" Oops. That was me again, interrupting.

"I worked in the hospital kitchen, but I didn't cook. I prepared food for people who don't eat salt, but most of the time I worked with fruit. That's what I did there. I worked in that hospital six days a week, and I stayed there for four years. By this time I was 24 or 25 years old, and I had not seen my family for four years. Then I heard that the Ayatollah Khomeini had returned to Iran from France and that there was a lot of trouble. I decided to go home."

I recalled the television images of revolution in Iran. An elderly man, the Ayatollah Khomeini — bearded and wearing a long robe — had returned from Paris, and was speaking to thousands of people, thousands of men. The sun was very hot. A camera panned across a field of chanting, cheering supporters. I was reminded of similar scenes of the Red Guards in China's cultural revolution, and the comments of a Chinese colleague about her participation as a proud memory. Later, while I was working at Catholic Social Services as a counsellor, an Iranian client told me of his experience as a high school student carried away by the passion of the Islamic revolution and the overthrow of the Shah. It was a catalyst in his becoming, an awakening to his own abilities and desires. Both the Chinese woman and the Iranian man spoke of the power of their experience in the unfolding of events, as history makers.

Azar was going home. I could hear the chanting and gunfire as she spoke. Sympathizers of the Shah were being rounded up and arrested. A stream of refugees had begun to leave Iran. Still, Azar found her brother and sisters at home and well, but she also learned that she would no longer be allowed to return to Europe for work or study. Another door had been closed.

It was not long, however, before she learned of an opportunity to work as a telex operator in the office of the governor of Dubai. She decided to apply. Five hundred people passed an initial screening and were invited for an interview for only two positions. Azar was among them.

She arrived at the interview room in modest western dress, and was met by the consul for Dubai and Kuwait. He began by asking about her travel to Germany and what she did there. Azar talked about her schooling in Fulda and some experiences in Europe, but did not mention the trouble that had come before she left Iran. But then, the Iranian representative turned to the consul and said in Arabic: "This woman is no good for Dubai because she doesn't wear Moslem dress." Azar, who had understood the comments, began to question the representative's remarks about her clothes, and they argued in Persian.

Mystified by this outburst, the Dubai Consul asked what had happened. Azar offered that she could speak a little English and she began to explain the situation to him. "I said the clothes don't show if I am a good woman or not. Maybe I could cover my hair, but inside I could be a very bad woman. Maybe I am like this (she indicated her own dress) and I am a very good woman. Who knows?"

Impressed, the Consul murmured in Arabic, "marhabou [very good]." Azar turned to the Iranian representative and chastised him for his remarks, then she opened the door and slammed it behind her. She was certain her outspokenness had eliminated her as a candidate for that job.

Four days later, however, a letter arrived, offering Azar the position in Dubai. The consul wrote that he was impressed by her words. He said that he agreed that clothes cannot show if someone is good or bad, and he thought that Azar would be a good person for his country. It was luck again for Azar who desperately needed a job to support herself. Ten days later, she again waved goodbye to her family and fiance, and left for Dubai for a year.

During that year, Azar managed considerable travel. She visited India, Syria, Sudan, England, Hong Kong, the Philippines and Australia, providing telex service for the Dubai consul. It was a wonderful break from the madness and disappointment at home, and she enjoyed the people she met. But she could not escape the news from her country. Iran was now at war with Iraq, and every night on TV she saw bombings in Tehran. She grew increasingly worried about her brother, now a sergeant in the army, and she begged to go home.

Air travel from Dubai was impossible because of the war. All flights in and out of Iran had been cancelled. There was only one way to get home: by boat. Azar paid the outrageous fare, and joined 115 crowded others on the five day journey across the water. There was not much protection, and few facilities. The boat smelled sharply of its human cargo. Her skin became red and swollen. But she was at home. Once inside the country, she caught a flight to Tehran.

Her brother was still in Tehran, still whole. He had so far managed to avoid battle duty because of illness. His luck, however, came with a price. The police made regular observations of his house. Azar realized, in spite of regular requests from Dubai for her return, that she must now stay with her family.

She was now ready to marry her fiance, Mahmoud. He had been waiting for her since before she left for Germany, a promise made eight years before. In the chaos of both war and revolution, no one could be sure what would happen in the future. They were married three months after her return, and moved into the same big family house as Azar's brother and his wife.

Both men worked together for a time. Azar had given birth to her first child and was expecting her second. She was busy caring for the house and her family. In spite of everyone's efforts to maintain a normal life, however, life was never normal. Iran was at war with Iraq, and there are no wars without soldiers. The family now had frequent visits to the house by the police, wanting to know why Ali and Mahmoud had not gone to battle.

"Then one night, at about three or four in the morning, the police broke into our house. We were sleeping. In came six people, all with guns. My child and I were terrified. I asked what was going on and the soldier said 'Quiet! Don't ask any questions! We are looking around.' I asked him why he didn't just tell me what they needed. I knew what was in my house."

"He said 'No!', and they continued. They gathered everyone together and they watched us. The baby was crying. They shot the baby and they pushed me into the wall. I went to the hospital, but my unborn baby was dead. The doctor did a caesarian and took the baby."

While Azar was in the hospital, the police came and took Mahmoud to jail. He was beaten and had his teeth broken. He was taken to hospital. Finally, a brother-in-law appealed to the authorities to release Mahmoud, saying that his wife had just got out of hospital and needed his care. He asked for only five days

leave and received a temporary release. On the wise advice of a brother-in-law, he and Azar left Iran immediately.

I was numbed by the immensity of the tragedy, and by Azar's courage in sharing it with me, yet I could find no words to comfort them. Azar and Mahmoud's experience was so far from anything I had encountered that I felt any words would only come from a vacuum. My list of questions provided no avenue of escape from this kind of reality.

Things were quiet for a few moments as we each groped to find our place again within this conversation. Across the room, Mahmoud looked away from us, cigarette smoke veiling his expression. "We don't talk about it now," admitted Azar.

* * *

It's a scenario I've tried to expose Canadians to, situating the foreignness of the refugee experience within a Canadian context. Simple, really. Just one thing begins to slip — a difference of opinion with the government is twisted and becomes a threat — and a whole chain of events begin to unwind. Those in visible and high status jobs like a reporters and teachers become easy targets for well-placed gossip and social isolation. The decision to flee emerges from many converging fears: the future of your children, the possibility of further violence, reprisals against other family members, the experiences of your former friends. You arrive at the US border in the middle of the night to surrender yourself to the authorities only to learn that the Americans, too, consider you a dangerous subversive.

Reactions to this kind of scenario always fascinate me. They usually begin with some nervous laughter and lots of looking around. Then some people will begin to engage with the dynamics of the task of becoming a refugee and grow quite serious. Others, though, laugh it off as yet another game, someone else's problem, not me, man! In groups such as student teachers, I have to wonder about how such individuals will relate to the range of life experience among learners they will have in their classes, and how they situate themselves professionally and within their community.

I have to wonder about the treatment of students like Azar and Mahmoud in their classrooms. Both have much to say about their time in Canadian classrooms, but that story will come later. For now, it is enough to imagine how they might leave Iran, and where they might go. After all, they have never learned

how to be refugees. They must learn as they go the skills of dealing with new and foreign bureaucracies, locating each other if they become separated, getting food with little or no money, tying into networks for information about receiving countries, surviving without access to medical help, and maintaining a sense of self in sometimes hopeless conditions.

What is that moment when an ordinary citizen is transformed into a refugee? Is it the escape from one's country, official designation by the United Nations, or is it a moment much earlier with the realization that flight from one's home is the only option for survival? It's not so different from other traumas encountered closer to home: violence against women and children, economic violence and homelessness, the battle against dependence and cultural genocide among indigenous peoples. How do the increasing numbers of people in such situations find new ways to live? How does education prepare us for or support such change?

The actual crossing of the border into Turkey went without incident. Ritual questions were asked and answered, stamps applied to passports — three month stay only, and appropriate warnings given. With passports issued by the new Islamic regime, neither Azar nor Mahmoud bore any mark of suspicion. They could pose, along with the thousands of others who were leaving, as tourists. Their getting out was fairly straightforward, but it was quickly followed by the first of many unpredictable difficulties of travel abroad: the fact that the closest bus station from the border was about three or four kilometres down the road. They travelled it on foot, lugging their bags of clothes, food and goods with them. Azar's freshly scarred belly didn't make it any easier to carry her share of the load. The otherwise inconvenient distance seemed endless to her. Once in town, though, they found buses leaving for all parts of Turkey, including Ankara, where they were headed.

Azar held the address where her brother and his family were staying, and she looked forward to the comfort of family in otherwise unfamiliar surroundings. She had not thought about where they would be staying, but she was shocked at what she saw: a basement, small and dark, a single room whose damp walls were to keep the six of them until something, anything happened. This was where they lived, ate and slept together for more than a year.

Their education as refugees, however, had only just begun. They met many more Iranians in Turkey, and heard experiences about the system, possibilities for the future, strategies for escape. They heard some stories of success and others of

disaster. Friends came and went. The three month limit on their visas meant that Azar and Mahmoud might have to plan to leave Turkey for several days to apply for new ones. The only way to escape this ruling was to gain official refugee status from the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR). The status would allow them to remain in Turkey while they searched for a country of resettlement.

The lineup outside the UNHCR office in Ankara was long indeed. Every day, refugees — Iranians, Kurds from Iraq, Poles, Palestinians, Afghans, Chinese — lined up to try to convince officials about the life threatening conditions of their situations. Azar and Mahmoud wondered what chance they would have in such a crowd to get to someone who would listen. They decided to go to Syria for a time. There was a less crowded UNHCR office in Damascus. Maybe they would have better luck there.

It was not true. Although they were fortunate to have the support of other Iranians in Damascus, their refugee claim was put off. Finally, they learned that their claim would be sent to the area head office in Beirut, but it was too late. Their Syrian visas were expiring and extensions were impossible to get.

While in Syria, Azar and Mahmoud befriended another Iranian couple. The wife was very ill with cancer and needed medical treatment, but her family had no money to pay for the doctors she needed. Azar, with her nurse's training, went to care for the dying woman every day. While she was there, she met a young Iraqi Kurdish man who was also helping the family. He was about 25, well-educated, and in a similar situation to their own. They agreed to pose as his parents in order to help him get into Turkey with them.

There were so many details at this point in the story that I was becoming confused. Why would Azar and Mahmoud agree to such a deal with this stranger? Why couldn't he use his own passport? People were passing into and out of the story so quickly that connections were becoming difficult to maintain. Azar's previous experience, even though touched with violence, was never so fragmented as what I was hearing now.

"Excuse me, Azar....." How could I cover my ignorance of the political realities of this region? How could I interrupt her story for such details? "Why would you help an Iraqi guy get into Turkey, when Iran was at war with Iraq?"

"Laura, he was a Kurdish man, not an Arab. He was running from the Iraqis, too. But, you know, there are also Kurds in Turkey, and they also have

political problems. If he showed his passport at the Turkish border, they would never let him in."

Once again, they were successful at the Turkish border, this time accompanied by their new "son", Mohammed. Mohammed came to live with the family in Ankara while he worked to establish his refugee status there. He had a brother living in the US whom he was hoping to join. One day, he and Mahmoud went to the UN offices to deliver his documents for examination. A week later, Mohammed went for an interview with an officer about his application. Azar waited and waited, but he had not returned. Finally, there was a knock at the door.

It was Mohammed with the police. They brought him inside and proceeded to question the family. "How can you Iranians live with this Iraqi when there's a war going on?" they asked. The staff in the UN offices had become suspicious because of Mohammed's lack of fluency in Persian in spite of his claim to be Iranian, and that is what had led to his arrest. He was to be deported to Syria. Everyone cried as Mohammed was led away, never to be seen again. Only two days later a letter arrived: Mohammed had been accepted for resettlement in Denmark. Two days too late.

The game continued. Every three months, Azar and Mahmoud left Turkey and joined a cheap tour through Bulgaria. Most of the travellers on these trips were in the same situation as theirs: they needed to leave in order to stay. In the meantime they had three interviews with UN officials, but with no papers to document the seriousness of their situation, their case was rejected as too weak. Azar's brother was successful in his application, though, and after a year, he and his family left for Canada.

Azar and Mahmoud were alone. There were no more strategies for escape. Finally, they appealed to a local refugee assistance organization for help. "They had come to see where we lived. They saw that the walls were wet, it was not healthy. My leg hurt, and we were sick all the time. The people who came looked at everything and they were very sad. They cried. They asked how we could live there. We told them it was because we had no money to leave. They helped us."

Something else was happening, too. Far away, in Edmonton, Azar's sister had received a letter from the refugee assistance organization in Ankara and had made contact with a Catholic Church asking for their assistance in sponsoring the couple. The Church community agreed to try to help the couple, an application

for refugee sponsorship was filed. An invitation was sent to the Canadian Embassy in Ankara, asking them to interview Azar and Mahmoud, and to screen them for immigration.

"We went to the office and the guy looked at me. A long time before, my husband and I had our picture taken together. We were just engaged. I had put the photo in my passport [to prove they had been married several years] and I forgot it was there. Later, we went to talk with the officer, and he asked me about my life before. He wanted to know how long I had known my husband. I told him we knew each other for a long time.....we were engaged for eight years. I had forgotten the picture in the passport. He just opened it and looked, and looked at me and my husband. I told my husband there must be some problem with the passport, but he didn't think so. I said there must be because the man was looking at it, closing it, looking at it. He didn't say anything, he just watched. Then he said, 'O.K.'

"Is that the picture you showed me? The one you brought?" It was a kind of connection with that moment to know that we had the same photo there with us in that Edmonton living room.

"This picture is from a very long time ago, in a restaurant. It was three weeks after we got engaged. At that time, things weren't great, but everyone was relaxed. It was much better than later on." As Azar held the photo in her hand and spoke to me, she returned to a night and a restaurant and a time long ago. She was smiling a tired and somewhat distant smile.

I was, too.

* * *

Canada. A place far away from from trouble. A place to start again. There should be help for us there. After all, with a brother and sisters already settled in Edmonton, there should be few problems to deal with. They know what to do. They love us. They are waiting for us. We miss them.

"When we first came to Canada, my husband and I were very happy. At the airport, after I saw my sister and she had changed 100%. She stood beside the counter (not looking at us) and I couldn't believe that she was my sister. After ten or eleven years of not seeing each other, you would think we would be happy, laughing and crying, and kissing. But for her there was nothing."

"After we went to her house. After just a half hour she said 'You and your husband can just stay here one night.' For me, it was very upsetting. I couldn't believe it. My husband decided to sleep on the floor. He said he didn't want to sleep in their bed. In our country, it is very different. If somebody comes to stay at our home, we would never say you can only stay tonight. If they want to stay a whole year we cannot tell them to go."

"The next day after we slept at my sister's house, we moved to my brother's place. He asked us to come and live with them."

"So, how did you feel about the rest of the country, about just being here?"

"At this time, we were very sad. I wished I had never come to Canada. I kept asking why we came to Canada, why we didn't go to a different country because having no family would have been better than what we faced here. I came to Canada alone and I lived like a stranger."

Their first week in Edmonton, both Azar and Mahmoud found jobs in restaurant kitchens. They had no outside support, but more importantly, they didn't want to be obligated to anyone.

"I went to apply in a restaurant. I said to the boss, 'Can you give me one operation?' He laughed and laughed, and said 'OK, here's your operation.' His wife asked me if I knew how to fill it out. I said no, I can just write my name. She said she would help me fill it out. Later I told my brother I found a job very easily. He asked me what I said. I told him I asked for an operation. He said 'Not operation, this is an application!' I said I didn't know and no one had told me, but I got the job."

"We were very happy, but at the same time the work was very hard. The manager made me work all the time — Saturday, Sunday — all the time. But we didn't have enough money...."

So, they felt fortunate when they learned that Canada Employment would provide them with five months of full-time English classes. They hoped that finally they might meet more people and learn about this new place. Azar really wanted help because, although she could speak a little English, she could hardly read or write it at all.

I wondered how she had learned German with so little knowledge of the Roman alphabet. If she had studied in Germany and Denmark for four years, she must have had a system for learning those languages. I remembered my own

experience trying to learn spoken Mandarin, and my efforts to learn a quick and comprehensible notation system so that I could capture sounds, meanings, ideas for words which bore no similarity at all with my own language. It wasn't like learning French. With French there were frequent cognates for English words, like 'lampe' and 'animale'. With Chinese, I had to find a new way to learn that 'ren' meant people, and 'mei' was beautiful. Thank goodness the Chinese had adopted a Roman alphabet system, called pinyin, to help people like me!

I asked Azar about the system she used for learning German. At first, she talked about German/English cognates like 'guten morgen' and 'good morning', referring mainly to use of oral language. She felt that she was lucky to be young then, and to be able to learn so quickly. Later, she began to talk about writing. "For example, I think 'guten morgen' in German, and in my language they write [indicating tranliteration to Farsi letters], and 'sokdarhe' is the same, good morning. But I open books, I understand what they say because three words they say it, but just one word — good morning."

Their first day at Provincial College, they were interviewed and tested for placement in an appropriate class. They were placed with the same teacher, and began their studies. Disappointment, however, was not far away. "We sat in a classroom. We — me and my husband — everybody was upset because there was just the teacher and the newspaper. We were supposed to read, but we didn't understand what a newspaper was! What was she reading? But she didn't teach us."

"And nobody understood, nobody. We just listened, and she asked if we understood, and we said yes, yes, yes, but really nobody understood what she said. Every day we felt tired. At 11:00, we wanted to sleep because she read the newspaper, and in the afternoon they showed movies — cartoons — I don't know the name."

I could hear her anger. Azar wanted to learn, she had gone to school, but the programme did not respond at all to the needs of the learners in the class. This was not the first time I had heard such a story. It was, however, a tangible example of how a longstanding federal-provincial system designed to serve newcomers without either government accepting responsibility for programme coordination or curriculum failed to serve either the learner or the taxpayer supporting it. I couldn't resist an obvious question: "Did anyone ever complain to the teacher?"

"Lots of times. We told her about the newspaper, but she said the government said we had to read. She told us the government said to read the newspaper. For five months we had newspaper! I didn't learn any words."

"What about the boss? Did you complain to the boss of Provincial College about the teacher, then?"

"The first time, ten students went together to talk with the boss, and he didn't listen. He said you are students for just five months, and then that's it. If you want to change, you can study more after this five months. It's right now or nothing!"

"One day, a Canada Employment counsellor came after the course, to talk about jobs, because after five months everybody had to go and find jobs. I asked her how we could go and find jobs when we don't know how to speak, how to read, how to write. How can we find jobs? And she said, 'You speak very well. That's enough!' I asked how can it be enough? We don't know how to speak correctly... but she said I talked too much. She said that."

I tried to express surprise. I really did. I wanted to believe that Azar's was just a singular frustrating experience amid thousands of successful others. My work with other immigrants, though, could not allow such naive optimism. Azar had gone to school, an adult with an understanding of what she wanted and what she needed there. She had used her limited English to express concern, not only to her teacher, but to the administrator and to a Canada Employment counsellor. At each step her concerns were dismissed.

After the course was finished, she returned to the same kind of work as before, the same hours. "Cooking and cleaning... and the money was just $5.00 an hour. I worked ten or twelve hours, with no overtime, nothing!"

"One day, we bought a table and chair set at a garage sale [the very one we were sitting at], and we were taking it home by ourselves [on foot], but it was very heavy. My husband and I couldn't carry them. A man looked out his window and saw us. He came outside and he spoke to us and we thought he was laughing at us. We tried to speak. He asked us to be quiet and he asked us where we were going with the table and chairs. We told him we were going to our apartment, and he said 'OK, I'll help you.'"

"And then he helped us take the table and chairs to our apartment, and he looked around the room and saw that it was empty, and he was very sad. He is

Canadian. He asked if we have friends here, and we said no, we don't have any friends. He said 'OK, we have a friend. She's working at Catholic Social Services.' He gave us the address and phone number and everything. After that, we met Laura."

She was taking more ESL classes in the evening, and she and Mahmoud would frequently come to talk to me at Catholic Social Social Services. Neither Azar nor Mahmoud had sufficient reading or writing skills in English to handle the mail they received from government offices such as Alberta Health Care, Canada Employment, Revenue Canada. They needed assistance to understand the papers they received. Each of them held fast to the idea that things could get better: that with more training, their experience and hard work would pay off. They hoped I could help them obtain further training. They also visited me as a way to make contact with a Canadian, to express their frustrations with their kitchen jobs, and to keep alive their hope for change.

The next year, I initiated a special English literacy class for immigrant learners at Catholic Social Services. It was intended to bridge a gap which exists for many immigrants: between having a little oral English and beginning to read, write and comprehend the community around them. Azar registered in the class and attended as her work schedule allowed. She kept a notebook of the language experience stories we made as a group. She learned to write a little. Later, she got more help from a volunteer teacher who worked with a small group of women, working specifically on sound/symbol correspondences, word and sentence construction.

"Now I remember. I wrote ten poems for those who don't have money and who have lots of money. We have a newspaper in our country. It's for young people. They put my poems in there, but they didn't put my name, just an L. I wrote about the people they are working in the street, what happened to those people."

"And you wrote those to express yourself? Those were ideas you had?"

"Yes. Sometimes, I couldn't sleep in my country or in Germany. I think and I think and I think, and then I write a poem. For example, some people say if you have lots of money and look at some poor people, and you say 'OK, no problem. This is not by business.' Then people say 'If you kill ants, there will come someone who is bigger than you and they kill you. Don't put your foot on the ants.'"

"So, are you still writing poems? Do you still write poems in Persian?"

"No. Sometimes, I tell them to my husband, when I am very mad at him. I tell something to him in poems. Sometimes they are from before, sometimes new, but I don't write them down now."

"And how did you get most of your news, when you were in Iran?

"Ten years ago, I read in my language... the name is Workers' News. They wrote about companies. How many people are working and never get paid. And about women, what happened to women in my country. Only about twenty per cent of the people read it. Because never the government they like these kind of people."

"We call this an underground newspaper. You have to go to a certain place to buy it, and they keep it under the counter."

"Underground, yes. And I read the magazine that I wrote the poems for. This is nice because sometimes they teach to people — please don't go outside. Please don't talk to man — for girl. And for man is the same. Be careful because some men are no good. And they had world news."

In 1991, Azar was finally accepted into a full-time federally- sponsored programme for immigrant women which included opportunities for both English literacy learning and work experience based on the individual's experience and goals. The class includes women from Iran, Ethiopia, Somalia and Cambodia. In this class, Azar is learning to read and write English more effectively, and she is learning basic word processing skills, issues in Canadian life, and workplace-related information. She has been very pleased with her progress.

I received a call from Azar. She was very upset, angry, frustrated. She had come home from school that afternoon expecting to find her training allowance in the mail. Instead, her mailbox had been broken into and robbed. If this single event were not enough, Azar told me it was the third time that thieves had broken into her mailbox and stolen a cheque. Each time she had to go through paperwork with a government officer — filling out forms swearing that the cheque was stolen, placing her hand on a Bible to affirm her sincerity. Each time she waited weeks for a replacement. This time, it was too much. The theft occurred at a time when her husband was worried about his job. There had been too many negative things lately. She was ready to cry — I could hear a softness in her voice.

She told me that she had gone to the police to register a complaint, and that she had to fill out a report of the crime. She was nervous, she said. She told the policeman that she wasn't sure if she could write well enough to make a report, but he encouraged her to try. In the end, she was successful. I could hear on the telephone how proud she was that she could accomplish this task on her own: talking to the police and writing a report.

"Now everything is changed, because now I go to a course. I'm not the same Azar as twelve years ago. Two nights ago, I wrote a letter for my friend in English."

"You wrote to Iran?"

"No, Turkey. My friend is a teacher in Turkey, but I don't know how to write and read in Turkish. I didn't write her for two or three years, since we left Turkey."

This seemed a wonderful freedom: to finally be able to express ideas to a person who once reached out to help. Azar's recent accomplishments with writing— a police report, a letter, applications — showed the tremendous progress she had made in her English literacy course. She had gained, not only in literacy skills, but in confidence to deal with others.

"But I know about all the world on just only TV. Sometimes my friend she came and she tell me 'this happened in your country.'"

"How does it make you feel when you hear things from other people like that that maybe you can't get for yourself?"

"Sad, very sad. I feel not happy. I'm very quiet now, you know. Inside my body is very sad because I don't... I can't say anything and I can't talk."

"Do you think that this will change?"

"No. Most of the time I feel like learning English is like being in jail."

"But don't you think you will ever change your feeling about this?"

"No. Always the same."

And that was how I had felt in China — like I was in a kind of jail. I could go to my job, I could socialize within my own community: foreigners. I could learn some conversational Mandarin. I could get some socially-sanctioned news through the ***China Daily.*** *My Chinese colleagues, however, had other channels.*

inaccessible to me, for getting other kinds of news. They could read a variety of news publications. They could move within the flow of life that is the country. I was forever named by my origin on the outside, waiguoren, literally an outside country person.

* * *

How does Canadian education respond to a woman like Azar? Is there a place for her in our schools? Clearly, education has been an important force in her life; she has always aspired to learn and to achieve. It was a desire for education which took her to Denmark and Germany. She looked toward education in Canada as a way to facilitate her integration.

"What kind of help do you think people need when they first arrive?"

"Lots! First they need a place to live and I know the government helps some people, but many other people with the church [church-sponsored] never get help. Where do they go, those people. They don't know how to speak, how to get around the city, so those people need help. And after that, the most important thing is English classes, more than the five months of nothing we got."

"But you know the government is changing that now. Now some people will only get part-time."

"I'm very sorry. It's not right. If I have to go to work half a day and go to school, I'm tired. I won't understand what's in the classroom. I can't study."

"But you know, I've been in the classroom myself full-time, and I found some people can't learn all day. They are used to going to work. They don't learn very well being in a classroom all day."

"They must look at who needs more classes, and offer those classes, and who doesn't need classes and not offer classes that don't work. I think all the courses should be together in the city under one name."

"So there should be one place that you can go to talk to someone and get some counselling?"

"Yes, this is important. Because people don't know much about Canada. In Canada, Edmonton, it's a very big city, and people don't know. Newcomers arrive here. They just go look around the streets. Sometimes people get information from their friends, and their friends give bad advice. This is not good. There needs to be enough help."

"Do you think there any any groups you think have a harder time than others?"

"I think there are. Refugees sponsored by churches. Those people have a very, very hard time. You know, those coming with a church only get an air ticket, not much else. They are tired and they come here and have nothing to do. They just want some friends and some help. Their sponsors say, 'OK, no problem. Let's go to work,' but work at what job? You look at lots of people. They are tired. They are not happy. They walk all the time."

"What about people you think have less difficulty, do you think there are any groups who have an easier time?"

"I don't know very well, but I think it is very easy for men. They come here, and after that they go and look for a girlfriend, and after that it is easy to live here!"

"Let me tell you about some men that I know, though. They came here — particularly I am thinking about some men coming from the Middle East — they come here, and there are many men who get stuck. They don't have a network of people to help them and they get stuck. They can't talk to anyone; they can't find a job here; and they just stay home. I see women in the same culture who are busy — they are studying English; they are looking after their children. But there are so many men. They don't know what to do."

"They know [the men], but they have nobody to show them. They need someone to show them. For example, I don't know the system in Canada very well, so how can I help someone? But there are people who know how to do that. If Canadians said, for example, that they needed two hundred people to come to work. We want to hire some newcomers to Canada."

"But Azar, I don't hear anybody saying they need two hundred workers. The problem is that there are not enough jobs. So, those kinds of people I was talking about, they are stuck. I wonder what is going to happen to those guys in five or ten years? I think they are lost."

"I think they will die like that, too."

"Do you think we could do anything to change that?"

"Yeah, if they were encouraged to go and get some training. But after that, they need help to find jobs, not just training and then dropping them. They know they cannot find jobs. But people shouldn't be left to sit at home. If the

government agrees to sponsor someone for training, after the training they must go to work. The government must help them get work."

"But what if there are no jobs?"

"The government has to make jobs. They can't say that they will give someone eight months training, then let someone go and sit at home, wondering where to find work. The government must help them to find a job after training, and must make sure they know they must do it.

"And every month, the people must help to pay back some money to help other people to get training. The government shouldn't pay people and send them to work and after be finished with them. No. The government needs to say that they will pay for training, and that person must work and pay some back every month. People like my brother and my husband went and got training and found a job and everything is done, but the government just paid money and is finished."

"What about your job? What did you think you were going to do when you came to Canada?"

"At first, I thought maybe I would go back to nursing or to hairdressing because I did both in my country. But when I came to Canada, I found it was all very difficult. It's not easy to go to your job. You have to go to school again, get training again. You have to do everything again. For hairdressing diploma, it costs $4000."

"And what kind of requirements for training do they have to get in?"

"For hairdressing, Grade 10. I would have to go back to school again. It's the same for nursing."

"But what about jobs for those people who aren't going to learn much English? What do you think about them?"

"Those people need help to get work if they are ready to work, to find good work, not just dishwashers. For example, if he was a teacher before in his country or her country, now she or he is going to clean houses. This is not her job! She feels very sad, angry, frustrated. But Canada is very big. Lots of people speak Chinese. Lots of people speak Spanish. Why should they only speak English? It shouldn't be a big problem to open a school for these people."

"And what about you, Azar? What do you think about your education in Canada?"

"I went to Provincial College and the Job School and it was zero. I don't know how to write. I don't know how to read, nothing! After I went to Catholic Social Services it was much better than Provincial College because we have a teacher, and she teach three days a week. And I study hard. She wrote something on the blackboard. We read, and everybody to try to reading and writing. I go a little bit, and after I start in my class at the Language Centre. And I say please, I need help to just write and read.

"Maybe my speak is not right but I understand and they understand me. After I can write and read. I know how to speak."

I thought about how education had touched Azar throughout her life — her early struggle for knowledge in a world without parents, her life as a worker, her emprisonment, her training, her travel, her experience as a wife and mother, her experience as a refugee, her experience as a newcomer in Canada, her experience as a literacy learner — and I wondered how schooling in Edmonton had responded to the dis/continuity of her life. This woman with so much energy and experience wanted so much to participate in her new society. Yet her experiences outside this country were treated, by and large, rather like mine in China: foreign, alien. I got to go home. Azar is making her home here.

Jan

Jan greets me at his office door with a familiar wave. It has been almost three years now, since a wintry day when he first appeared in my office at Catholic Social Services, a newcomer to Edmonton. He has always been fiercely proud of his abilities and his independence, a strong believer in the responsibility of individuals. His story is that of a survivor, of personal initiative and adventure. I have a sense of Jan not so much as an immigrant to Canada — a person focussed on the singular struggle to adapt to Canadian life — but as a twentieth century explorer, a person confident in but dissatisfied with the conditions of his home country, reaching toward the possibilities of a new place and time in the world.

When I made the decision about immigration, I didn't know — I really didn't know what was going to happen. And I came here by myself. When I came here, and I got a job, and I won the competition with Canadians — it was a great step. Of course, I couldn't compete with them because of my English and my orientation to the system because I was brand new. I knew that, and my boss — he knew that, too. But I had experience and background that they liked. And it showed me that with good experience, with good background, with good attitudes and commitment you can compete with people here. Even if your English is worse than Canadians' English. You can do this.

It's really funny because now my self-confidence is much, much higher than it was two years ago, or even five years ago, and it's a different kind of self-confidence. I could exist in Poland and I didn't have any problems. I knew the system. I knew the people. But this is a different kind of self-confidence. It's a self-confidence which is related to a different area, a different field, that I can do many things outside my country of origin. I can go anywhere and I can live there. I can exist — which is very important because the world is more open then....

I was thinking about leaving Poland for many years when I was a university student. For a while, it was more an idea, just to change places, move to a different country. But after I left university, it was a different story because I had a wife and family, and there was martial law in 1981. And then, three...four years after martial law, in 1985, I was thinking, because I didn't see any chances to improve the situation, not only the economic situation — because at that time the economic situation was really bad — but the political situation. A terrible mess in

the case of politics and the economy. I had spent half my life there and nothing had changed.

The town I lived in was small, but industrial. Smoke, factories, housing. It was an old town, too, with some ruins from the fourteenth century. I graduated from high school there, but I went away to the city for university. I applied for and was accepted into the Department of Psychology. It was very hard to get in because there was a lot of competition for a few places. I wanted to study psychology because it was a new field, a challenging field. I wasn't thinking to be a pure psychologist, though — with an office and clients and such. Psychology is a social study, and I wanted to know more about human beings and more about the social field.

If you wanted to be a university student, you had to pass a graduation exam in high school, first. Then, you had to pass an entrance exam. For Psychology, I had to pass a written exam in Polish language and literature. It was five hours writing — and you can choose the topic, but you have to write an essay in five hours. It's about twenty or thirty pages. And then, I had to pass an oral exam in Polish literature and a second one in either History or Biology. I chose History. And there were about ten or twelve people sitting behind a long table. I selected three topics. I remember one was the Polish-Swedish Wars in the 17th century. And I had to tell about all the wars — when, and then who, and what happened, and factors and outcomes. The third part was a foreign language exam.

The competition for the Department of Psychology was very strong because there were twelve candidates for each place. Jagiellonian University is the best in Poland and one of the oldest in the world, established in 1364. Because it was so prestigious, it was always a tough competition to get in.

I got a job with a big factory in my old hometown before I graduated. The factory gave me a scholarship to finish my education and, in exchange, I agreed to work for them for three years. I went into the office after I graduated and told them I was ready to start, but that place was so big that they didn't even know who I was. They just pointed to a desk and introduced me to my boss and that was that! They ran a coal mining equipment plant and they didn't want to be bothered with some novice psychologist. But I got factory housing and other benefits while I worked for them. They gave me a start. Later I went back to teach in the high school that I had graduated from.

The factory where I later worked sponsored the last two years of my study. And I had to work for them for three years, or pay back the money. Getting a job after graduation was different there. Huge workplaces with big benefits always had more people applying than they could hire. Other people got jobs through employment offices. You could go there and there were thousands of positions. The people responsible for hiring workers were receiving special bonuses for getting more people. There was no official unemployment under the communist system.

And the factory gave you a job and gave you a paycheque. The rest of your life was up to you. The factory where I worked was huge — seven thousand workers — and the factory owned thousands of apartments. They owned schools, swimming pools, motels for visitors. You could get vacations for cheap. You could buy fruit and vegetables more cheaply through them. You could buy a fridge, TV, car — it was easier to get things through them.

But I was still living in a country where I was dissatisfied, working for this factory in a not too stimulating job and thinking about a future that would only bring more uncertainty — political unrest and economic disaster. It's a kind of tradition in Poland. People were leaving, getting out and going anywhere they could: Germany, Italy, the US. Then, in 1987, my good friend Stan phoned one day and told me that he and his wife were having a party. They were leaving their city for a holiday and they wanted us and some other friends to come over for a farewell party. I understood his meaning. Officially, they were going for a holiday for two weeks in Italy. You couldn't tell anyone you were emigrating. There was no emigration. It was escape! Because the communist government and the secret police, they could take your passport. They took one daughter and left the other one with grandparents, and they went to Italy. Stan gave me an address in a refugee camp and told me that if I decided... But I had another plan I wanted to try first.

I was really tired, really confused because nothing worked normally. You couldn't buy anything there, you were organized there, using your connections and networks to help. If you wanted to get a better school or university, then you had to have connections. This is a black market situation, you know: bribing. Then, if you got a good education, you might gain in prestige but you wouldn't get much money. The highest paid workers were tradesmen. Those prestigious jobs are at the bottom in terms of paycheque. It was really crazy, like one huge mental health unit!

I wrote a letter to my aunt in the US. I had visited my relatives in New York a few years earlier, and I wrote now to ask for an invitation to visit again. We couldn't get a visa without an invitation. And I sent for it. I made up my mind. I was fed up and I was leaving. Of course, my parents were shocked and my wife was extremely unhappy, but they knew they could do nothing to change my mind. I was leaving.

You know, I was not an unusual person in Poland, complaining the way I did. It was a kind of hobby for most people to gripe about the system, the shortages, and the government. But only some people have the courage to just take a backpack and escape. Some people, they don't know how to do this. They are really scared and they cannot be an immigrant this way.

I got the invitation from my relatives and then I got a visa for the US. That was difficult. Only about ten percent of people get a visa. And I got one. They told me "We are giving you a visa because you were in the States eight years ago and you were there three months, and you didn't extend your visa, you just returned." After that, I didn't wait long. I left within two months with no plans to return.

When I left, I didn't know what was going to happen. I knew that an immigrant's life is not a holiday. I knew it would be tough, but I thought that I had to try it because if I didn't succeed I would never be able to say to myself that I didn't try. I would never complain about that. My plan was to try to avoid any illegal moves, to make as few as possible. I had the usual big farewell party with all my friends and I told them I was leaving for the States to do some work. Of course, they were pretending that they believed what I was saying, but they were pretty sure that this was the last time we would see each other, that I was really escaping. Not many other people knew I was leaving for real. I told my principal at school. I just went to him three or four days before I left and said, "I'm leaving, leaving to go to work."

The plane arrived in New York, and one of the first things I did was send a letter to my friend, Stan, still in Italy. Boy, was he shocked to hear from me!

I was in the United States.

I had heard a lot about Canada and the U.S. before I came here. When I was living in Europe and I was a high school student and a university student, I was fascinated by western culture and the development of North America, and with movies and books and music — country and western. It was fascinating. Of course those Hollywood movies are one thing, but I had a chance to read some

real books and some diaries. That gave me a different image: a very tough environment and hard work, hard-working people.

I got some work in New York. I only had a little basic English when I arrived, and I knew that it would be very difficult to get a job in psychology, almost impossible. When I arrived in North America I saw all those guys working really hard, physically hard. And I worked hard for one and a half years. That was enough. It was fine for a short period of time just to get some money. But I knew I didn't want to be a physical worker, a blue collar. I knew I had to do everything just to get out of this level.

But the modern situation here is, of course, different because the western part of the North American continent is the biggest part, like California for example. In Canada, there are some provinces that are the rich provinces, but they are still very new places. There are many things that need to be done in terms of development, and in terms of education and in terms of social life. In terms of everything. Montreal or Quebec or Toronto, they are three hundred years old. Edmonton is 125, no, one hundred years old this year! This is the same age as my high school!

The people who live in the eastern part of this continent, the immigrants, they are well established there. They are second, third, fourth generation immigrants. But in the west, we have thousands of brand new people. And this society is less established than eastern society. In Alberta, everything is changing every day, every year. Everything is moving. I see these changes as very interesting, and I think that I can contribute. I can contribute in practice. I can work with this. I can make a very little influence on this change.

I began to plan my next move. I went to the Canadian Consulate and applied to go to Canada. My first idea was to go to Halifax. I have a friend there, someone from the same city as me. They were telling me all the time to come to Halifax, but I knew (because of my interest in economics and politics) that the eastern part of the States and Canada was going into a deeper recession than the western part, and, in terms of the economy, the future is in the west. Some of my American friends have already moved from New York to Portland, to Seattle. They also moved from east to west.

Four months before I came to Canada I spoke with my friend, Stan. He and his family had been accepted by Canada and had left the refugee camp for Edmonton. I talked to them and they said this city is really great. I didn't know a

lot about Edmonton before, just information from papers and books. I thought to myself that it would be a good idea to go where you know someone you can stay with for one or two weeks. It's easier. And I decided to go to Edmonton.

I had bought a car in the States — a little Pontiac Acadian — and I left New York heading for Edmonton. It was November, and I was just wearing shorts and a t-shirt. It was still warm there. My first experience with Canadians was at the border. I had to cross the border at Buffalo because I signed a paper to say that I would go where my sponsor was. It would have been cheaper and easier for me to go through the States and cross the border in Idaho, but my sponsor was in London, Ontario — Polish Congress. I didn't want to go there.

When I crossed the American border, I couldn't find the right building and I had to go back. I said to the American officer, "I'm going to Canada", and he said "Go!" Then I told him I had a Polish passport, and that changed everything. He phoned to the Canadian crossing office and, when I got there, they were waiting for me. I had to report what day, what time and how I would cross the border. There were three or four nice-looking young ladies there. They teased me a little bit, and they asked where I was going — where I would like to go.

I asked "Can I go where I would like to go?"

They told me "It says London, Ontario, here on your visa, but where would you like to go?"

And I said "Edmonton."

They stamped my passport. "O.K. Go. Where's your car?"

I indicated my little Acadian, and they all laughed and asked if I was serious, if I was really going to drive that car to Edmonton. I said yes, and they wished me good luck. Then I called my sponsors and told them that, if it was O.K. with them, I would go straight to Edmonton. They were very happy to have people resign from their help. I just gave them my address in Edmonton in case they needed to contact me during the first year.

And after I crossed the border I felt a great relief because I was legally here in Canada. I didn't need to worry about anything. I had a legal visa. I could get health insurance. This was after two years struggling for a visa, with a tourist visa in the States — without health insurance. I was really, really happy. When I saw the Canadian flag, when I crossed the border, I said "I'm here, and nobody will bother me and I can stay here. I'm a legal person here!"

My first night I spent in Sudbury. Then, I was driving close to the Great Lakes — they were like a sea — and close to Thunder Bay the weather began to get worse. It was changing from rain to snow. My third night was in Saskatchewan, close to the Alberta border. That was a neat experience because, when I was travelling the third day, it was snowing, and I stopped in a little place — I don't remember the name — but anyway, I spent the night in a motel there.

When I woke up it was -25 degrees and there was a metre of snow. I couldn't start my car. Usually I drove from about six a.m. until six p.m. — twelve hours with breaks — but that day I couldn't start my car! It was like a piece of ice! I went to the lady in the reception and I asked her to help me, to phone somebody to come and start my car. She said I would have to wait until nine o'clock, and told me to go back to my room and wait. She would call me later.

Around ten a.m., a guy arrived with a huge truck and a machine to give you a jumpstart. It was a huge generator to jumpstart trucks, but he couldn't start my car for about fifteen minutes. He got it started, but then my heating system didn't work. I went into my room and put on about five sweaters and pants and socks and everything, and I started to drive to Alberta. It was terribly cold. I had to stop every twenty or twenty-five minutes just to scrape the windows — inside, not outside. I was almost frozen and there were no houses, no cars, nothing. I told myself I would die in this place, that they would find me in my car dead.

Just then, I saw a very small gas station — just one pump and a house — by the side of the road. There was a kind of a restaurant and they were cooking and selling some food and other stuff. I went in. I was cold and angry about this delay. I wanted to reach Edmonton. I bought a huge breakfast and hot coffee, and I said to the guy, "Listen, I have all my car things in the trunk, and the trunk is full. Can I borrow some tools from you and try to fix it?" He loaned me some stuff. It was very cold. I tried to get at the heater from inside, by the radio, but I couldn't loosen the screws. I used a huge screwdriver and broke in, broke the dashboard, but that didn't work. Finally, I opened the hood and found the wires, but there were so rusty I couldn't pull them. Anyway, I fixed it. I didn't know before that it was so easy to fix. And I left.

It was like three or four in the afternoon when I phoned my friends and told them I would be there in an hour. I had just stopped for gas, but then, after twenty or 25 km., something happened to my car. It lost power. I had to drive on

the side of the highway at a speed of about twenty km. per hour, and I could only get it into first gear.

People were passing me by. They were watching me in my little car with New York plates, full of stuff. I was driving so slowly. They looked really sorry, thinking about this guy in his dead car, that it couldn't do any more.

I got to Vegreville where I stopped and went to a big gas station to ask for help. I told them I didn't know what was wrong. They guys asked me just one question: "Did you buy gas recently?" I told them I had. They said there was water in the gas. They put in some antifreeze and it changed everything. An hour later, I was in Edmonton, greeting my worried friends and telling them about my adventures.

* * *

I spent a few days getting to know the city. The day after I arrived, they dragged me to Superstore. When I saw that place, I was really scared. I thought it was a terrible place and I wondered how people could shop there.

Thousands of people shopping, yelling and grabbing, walking on each other. I vowed never to shop there again.

I wanted to take an English course. I had learned most of my English working in the U.S. for a year and a half, without any programme. I read lots of newspapers and I watched TV for hours and hours, just to try and understand. I could talk to people, but it was very basic. I didn't have the English that would help me find a job and go to work. I went to Canada Place, but a lady who was working there told me that I could not get a programme because my English was too good. She pointed to my landed immigrant visa and showed a space with English, No. 1, French, No. 2 and both, No. 3. There was a check beside No. 1, and she said it meant that English was no problem for me. I had my interview in English without an interpreter in New York, in the Canadian Consulate. I thought it was better to go there by myself with my not good English than to go there with an interpreter, and they put a check by No.1, that I knew some English.

I mean, it's not that simple to find a job because of the recession, but immigrants with better English, they have a better chance to get a job. Immigrants with less English — it's a better chance that they will apply for the welfare rolls. And then the government will spend more money. It makes those people more frustrated. Not only that, at the same time the Canadians who are paying taxes are more frustrated. Why do we need 200,000 immigrants if there are no jobs...?

The lady told me I should look for a job. She didn't suggest anywhere I could go to find a job or tell me where I could get some counselling. She just said to look. So, I was looking for a job in the Journal, and I saw an ad for a job at Catholic Social Services. I applied there and I talked with the human resources officer. She gave me the impression that I had no chance because I had only been in Canada two or three weeks. Instead, she referred me to the Immigration Service and to Language and Vocational Assessment.

That was where I met Laura Ho and Anamaria Fantino. It was the first time that somebody was really willing to give me some information. I didn't have a good experience with Canada Place. I didn't know where to look for information, and it just happened that I applied for a job with the agency.

I was actually trying to do two things. First, I was trying to get a job, to support myself because I didn't have any money, and second, I was trying to get more education — English and professional upgrading.

This is a shock for people — the resume system, the interview system. It's a competition here. But there, there was no competition — it was connections. I mean, here you have to have connections, too! But you have to have a good resume, you have to get an interview, you have to pass the interview, and sometimes you have to send a hundred application to get one interview or five interviews with no job. It's very frustrating.

I had spent a number of hours at the university, walking from department to department, and talking to student advisors about what I could do there. I have a Masters degree in Psychology from Poland and I wondered if I could study or if I could get a licence. Most of the people I met there were nice people, but they didn't give me any real information. They just gave me a booklet or something and sent me away.

I still wanted to take an ESL course, but I didn't get the government-sponsored programme and I couldn't afford $500 for a university programme full-time. I had to find a job. I applied to work at Catholic Social Services twice. I didn't get a job. They sent me these letters that said: "Thanks. We will keep your resume for three months in our files."

It was the networks I had that helped the most. I met a guy through a counsellor at Catholic Social Services who worked for the Workers Compensation Board (WCB). I talked to him and he helped me a lot. He talked to some other people who worked there and they gave me a contract. It was a contract with the

Head Injury Unit, but it was a contract for pre-accident investigation — just to talk to people, to the client, to the lawyers, to the family. It was a real challenge because I had only been in Canada five months, and it was my first real job here with Canadians. I had to use my best English. I got a contract and I did my first investigation. I wrote a report. I asked some Canadian counsellors to help me to edit the report, and this contract — the next one I got — those guys liked the first one, and this helped me to survive economically.

You see, in each country, networks exist. Like in Poland, we had a network, but we had a different kind of network. You had to be a party member or you had to know party officials. It doesn't matter about your background, doesn't matter about your education or what you can do, the most important thing was knowing somebody. Here, I know that it's a similar situation, especially at higher levels, you know. You want up the ladder, you want to get a better job, you have to know some people. But if you come here with training and you start by getting into cleaning, it's like you put your feet into the swamp: the longer you stay there, you are deeper in the swamp. It's difficult to escape from there.

I also worked three days as a flyer carrier. I didn't have any money, and I went to an agency that distributed flyers and I spent three days there. I quit after three days because I got the job with WCB. And it was from that guy that I met through the counsellor that I started to get real help because he helped me to get a paying job. I got this job because he worked there, and personally, he knew some people who were looking for contractors.

At the same time, I was trying to talk to people, to find a place where people were interested in my background, level of education. I was attending all kinds of workshops at Catholic Social Services, and I was looking to ask people what I can do. And it helped me because — it was very simple, like — I did find an advertisement in the paper. I did apply and then there was subsequently an interview. And then, later on, I found that there were more than sixty people.

I remember that, during the interview, my boss he asked me for references, and I had great references from the United States — Harvard University, Columbia University, New York, the United Nations — very good and true references from my friends and relatives. And he said "This is impressive. This is very good, but I would like to talk to somebody who I know personally in Edmonton." I was here five months. I was lucky that I met some people during those five months and they agreed to give me references. If not, I mean in a different situation, probably I wouldn't have gotten the job.

There are a few people who have given me some ideas, who made some phonecalls, who phoned some places for me and helped me with references. It's very difficult to get any references here for somebody who is brand new. And everybody is looking for references. Do you know people here in Canada, in Edmonton, who can give you references? No, I don't. I've been here only two or three weeks or one month. My God! It was very, very important.

* * *

Getting into the system. Jan is talking about getting into the mainstream of society where he feels he can make a contribution. He is confident in his background, yet he searches for the places and the skills and the strategies which will permit his entry. I ask him directly if he considers his foreign experience or his accent and use of English a barrier to becoming competitive in Canada.

If you want me to compete on the same level as Canadians, don't talk about experience because my Canadian competitor has his or her own background and experience and I have my own. And we can compete. But I cannot compete with them because of my English. This is a disadvantage. If an employer likes my background and experience, he will not consider my English as a barrier, of course. But if he or she wants to find an excuse not to hire me, it's very easy. Because you know not many people, landed immigrants, have an English level like Canadians. I would like some training help in professional English.

But I don't want to have to worry about money. I mean, I don't need to work ten or twelve hours a day washing cars or washing dishes. Just lend me $1000 a month to allow me to survive, so that I can spend all my energy, all my time to study English. But not like Job School ESL English, real professional English, a good training programme. And then I will pay this back after I get a job. I will pay back $100 or $200 a month. The problem is that nobody will lend me money because I am an immigrant. I don't have a credit history, and maybe they think I will take this money and I will go back to my country of origin.

Right now, you see, there are quite a few immigrants — professionals — and they are looking for any kind of job just to get Unemployment, and go and get on welfare. And they don't want the welfare because of welfare, just to do nothing. Because they know that they can stay on welfare one or two years, and they can get courses. They can study. And this is how some people are using the system. Most of those people don't like that. They feel really bad, ashamed. But this is the only way that they can do this.

But I would say it would be more fair if government said "OK, there are more and more newcomers, immigrants on the welfare payroll. Let's just forget it. Lend them the money." This is how I would like to do it. And probably it would cost less money or the same money the government is spending now for unemployment and welfare.

Professional English, high quality English. I've heard this same demand over and over again from immigrant clients. But what does it mean? What is the shape of the critique and of the alternative? I decided to ask Jan more about his view, to open up the topic of education with him.

In general, governments should spend more money. There is a connection between amount of money and number of unemployed immigrants or immigrants who are receiving welfare or who can't find a job. There are other issues, but level is number one. If we can spend more money to give people better English, they are able to find a job easier and faster.

You really think it's that simple?

It's not that simple to find a job because of the recession, but immigrants with better English they have a better chance to get a job. Immigrants with less English have a better chance to apply for the welfare rolls. And then the government will spend more money. It makes those people more frustrated. Why do we need 200,000 immigrants if there are no jobs?

I'm thinking now about your friend Stan's experience when he went for language training. I remember him coming to talk to me. He was so frustrated because the government was spending money...

They were wasting money! You see, the problem is that all agencies and organizations which are teaching English, they are fighting for funding, but most of them they don't think about the quality of programmes. They think to get more money. Then we can employ more ESL teachers. Then we can even report that we had 150 classes with 3000 students. Then we can apply for more money. But most of them they don't have any idea how to provide this programme, and they are not providing good quality programmes.

You see, not everybody who is born here is a teacher. But this is the general idea here, that everybody who was born here can teach English. To be an ESL teacher we need specially-trained people: people who know how to do this.

You mean people who know about teaching?

Yes, but who understand who they are working with. I have the impression that, for a number of ESL teachers, this is a good opportunity to get a job — they don't have a chance to get other jobs, and, for them, it's a negative selection. You know what I mean? What can I do? I cannot work here. I cannot work there. I can be an ESL teacher! We have thousands of immigrants and I can be an ESL teacher. I can teach them English. This is a very stupid idea.

ESL students, they are different from regular students, and they are more difficult students because of a number of factors: educational background, psychological history, learning problems, literacy. Because they are more difficult students to teach, we need the best teachers.

What is going on now in your work and your own plans for education? Could you talk about that?

In terms of employment, I'm still doing research. I've been doing this now for two and a half years. My contract will expire in March 1993. I can't advance. It's just a contract position, not a permanent position. Right now, I'm just looking around for somewhere that I can use the experience I gained in this job. I'm looking for a similar kind of job related to health and cross-cultural issues, but there aren't many. They are all funded by government and now there are cuts because of the recession. I hope next year will be better because it's an election year!

I'm still looking around and trying to find my place which is not too easy because my experience is from a foreign university — it's foreign experience which is not really recognized here. I mean, I can get a paper that my Master's is the same level as a Canadian Master's, but if I want to go to some programmes, If I want to take some courses, it's more difficult. They don't know my university. They know my programme, but only from a student book. Is this an excuse because there are too many students? It's very difficult.

What are some of the practical problems that you encounter in applying to study here?

Each department is requiring some qualifying years or courses. My background, my Master's is officially recognized, but in real life it is not recognized. I have to take one or two semesters of qualifying courses.

It could be that cases like mine are more difficult to deal with and they [programme administrators] don't have time or they don't want to bother. This

requires more work or more thinking or more changes and it's easier to run a department with no changes, with just all those rules that are steady rules and they know how they work. People like me are trouble makers because we are demanding too much. We want to do something new which is beyond existing programmes.

Have you made a decision what you are going to study yet?

I almost made a decision, but it's difficult for me to get in. In that department, they are reviewing applications only once per year. I could not start anything officially earlier than September 1994. That's almost two years! I decided to go to some other places. I'm still investigating.

Why are you so interested in advancing your formal education at this point in your life?

Because I would like to have more education. This is the number one reason. And the number two reason is that I would like to use my personal interest to have a decent life and work with my brain instead of working with my hands, muscles. Through education, I can meet more people and I can do more and more interesting things. I would like to have a broader base than I have right now. I don't have one idea and then spend the rest of my life with one idea. I'd rather have many ideas and then switch, trade for new ideas, and be more creative and more flexible.

Do you think that this happens to most immigrants, that after they've been here for a certain amount of time they start making another plan? Maybe they come here with one kind of plan, and after they've been here for a while they start working on a new plan?

Probably, yes. Usually they are looking for a job, any kind of job to get some money and survive. If they can get a good job with good money, most of them they don't think about plans related to education. They are satisfied with money and a job.

So, you you think that the workplace also has a role in adaptation and adjustment?

Definitely! Although it depends on the kind of workplace. If management and the employees are not interested in you, you have to just be there and do your work. It will not help.

Do you think that the adult education community responds to the needs of immigrants in this community?

It's difficult to judge. I don't have experience with the whole system. What I know I know from discussions with other people, what I heard or read, or from my own experience, but I can say that the existing system does not respond. In general, how we learn is culturally-biased. If we have people from different cultural backgrounds, different learning attitudes, different learning expectations and different learning styles w cannot put them all together and use just one teaching system — the one that's already here. There's no way because what we are trying to do, we are trying to make one Canadian society. But this will not work. This will work for second, third generation, but it will not work with newcomers. With tailoring of programmes, it will work better. Even the way that we teach English should be different. Teachers should be very flexible and they should know how to adjust their teaching style to newcomer needs.

Do you think, then, that we need to recruit teachers from minority communities?

It might work, but I would like to see people who were born here, English native speakers as well — a combination of native English and minority teachers. It's really difficult to find really good English teachers for immigrants.

Is there a role for education in exploring the common ground between Canadians and newcomers?

Of course, education is the base for all changes. If you want people to change their attitudes, then you have to teach them. You have to provide them with some information. Colleges and universities should be involved in this, but I am not sure that they are interested because this is a difficult task. It needs work and money. All those racist behaviors and attitudes are based more on the fact that people don't know people from other cultures. And I would say that looks are second or third factor, but number one factor is that those people are different than me and I don't understand them. I am afraid because I don't know what I can expect from them. And they behave different and they think different and they might be a danger for me. Then I don't like that. And here is a place we can use education to make changes.

Governments today talk about the need for a highly-skilled workforce to compete in the global economy. Do you have any advice for them with regard to the contributions immigrants could make to this country?

Immigrant-receiving countries, like Canada, have a very good opportunity to be very competitive in world economy and they are not using this. You see, I think it's better and cheaper to use newcomers as business resource people to contact with other countries. Of course it's better to send someone who has firsthand cultural knowledge as a member of a trade delegation. Send them to China and they will make business for Canada, not for China. They are Canadian. But because they know Chinese culture, they know how to deal with people, this is not a simple thing just to make trade with other countries. In signing papers, you should know how to deal with those people, then you can have a better deal. If you go to eastern Europe, they you should know all those tricks how to deal with people, how to convince them to make a deal. What I see is that the Canadian government is not doing this but they are spending lots of money to train Canadians to do this — workshops and language training. There's no way! If I have a chance to go to my country of origin and use my first language and my knowledge of how people are making deals there, I will come back with a better deal than someone who learned a little bit of my language. It's very cheap. And in Canada you have people from around the world. Then you can include those people in this system. As I know, there are very few at this point.

And not just in business. We should include people who are newcomers if you are sending any kind of delegation to different countries to talk about different issues: education, women's issues, development. This is very good to make contact. We cannot separate business from social environment, from education, from informal networks and contacts.

Up and down. Up and down. I have to fight to ride this rollercoaster. This is the immigrant's life. You know what I mean. Now, I'm walking down. It's easier now, but I still have to walk. Fortunately I have some people who can give me positive feedback or who can push me. I would say now that my foster land is here in Canada, North America. For sure. But I don't have a big problem with adaptation to different places. I have to get my background and English to the highest level I can. Then I'll be ready to go and compete with anybody.

Dave

Dave is speaking. I find it hard to connect the man I am listening to today with the one whose life is the subject of this story. He is a quiet young man in unremarkable western clothing, well-groomed and well-mannered. He fits well in the Canadian government office where he works. It is only Dave's pronounced Vietnamese accent that betrays his origins, that makes you curious to learn more about what has come before, to know how he came to work with the computers in this office.

Dave was initially hesitant about participating in my study, but agreed to meet with me anyway. We have known each other for some time, and I thought it would be fairly straightforward to gain his support. But his hesitancy spoke to me from an unexpected place. It was not that he was nervous about the repercussions of participating, nor was he concerned about my asking him personal questions. For Dave, a young man raised with traditional Vietnamese values, speaking in an extended way about oneself, indicates a lack of modesty, a brazenness. Though I had previously spent considerable time working with Dave, I now began to understand him in a new way.

I explained to him the reasons why I became involved with this particular idea, that the experiences of immigrants are all but invisible to mainstream educators, that educational opportunities will not improve for immigrants unless people begin to speak out about what has happened to them. Dave listened. There was a confusing moment as competing values were weighed, but he agreed that it was important to speak out about this subject and that others might benefit from learning what happened to him.

So we began, over cups of tea and frequent interruptions from a jealous bird, to reflect on how Dave came to be a Vietnamese in Canada, a computer programmer, a Canadian...

For a young man growing up during and after a war like the Vietnam War, life is not always straightforward. Dave's father had been associated with the regime toppled by the communists in 1975, and his family had moved out of their traditional home into the anonymity of a new neighborhood in Saigon. Although Dave aspired to higher education and had the ability to qualify for university

study, he now had to conceal his family background to participate in the competition. His background alone could disqualify him.

"If they know your family history related to the government, they still try to kick you out the university. So it's very difficult for me to get into the university. But after the communists took over the country, my family just left the old house and go to a new place. And, from that, the people they don't know what is the past. My family was kind of hiding. And after that, I got into university, but I didn't tell the history of my father. I feel very sad because I'm proud of my father, and in my family my father is something — the light for all the children to look and to do the same what he did. But now I have to hide everything for me to continue to study."

"I went to the Education University to become a teacher. It's very hard for a youth to decide what they go to do. In my country usually the decision made by the parents. At first I decide I want to become an engineer, but just because my grandfather used to be a teacher, and my father used to be a teacher and I am the youngest in my family, and one member of my family should become a teacher. So that's why... it's almost their decision, not mine!"

"At that time, more than 8000 people registered to university, and they only take 600. Usually, they have the exam when you transfer between junior high and senior high, and another exam after you finish high school to get into university. After you graduate from high school, if you don't have any job or continue to any other post secondary, for men, they toss you into the army. And usually, if you belong to a group related to the old government, you only get a couple of weeks of training, then they send you into the real war."

"After the first year in university, I happen to like my job. I like to teach, and I think I have the aptitude to teach. I studied for four years to teach physics. On the third year, we have one month practice teaching in a high school, and for the fourth year, we have almost three months. I taught physics, high school physics. Nothing else. Then I got a teaching job in my city. I taught for almost a year."

It seemed so straightforward, so peaceful, this progression from high school to university to teaching. I was having difficulty imagining how it was possible, in post-war Vietnam, to achieve such an existence right under the noses of the officials of the new regime. Dave's last comment, however, that he had taught almost a year, made me stop and think: "Almost a year? Why did you say almost? Did you quit?"

"No, I tried to escape from my country.

"Actually, my family think to get away from the country when the communists took over, and, just because before we have no chance to get involved to escape, we have to live, we have to adapt to the new society. We cannot plan anything if we do not have a place to live. But every time I have to tell lie about my father's history it make me sick. And also, every time something relate to my father, it makes me scared and it makes my family scared, too, because we are afraid they will find out about my past.

"And we're living in the city. It's very hard. And the way the communist government control people, it's very hard. Like if you want to stay in your friend's house overnight, you need permission at the local government. And if you want to move out of the city, you need the paper, the permission paper. So usually there is some kind of group of people, they arrange — they connect to the boat owner, and usually we have to pay for that."

What kinds of skills does it take to make a successful escape as Dave did? I have worked with many people from Vietnam before, but now I found myself, for the first time, learning about the experience of flight in those boats. I remembered those pictures of hundreds of people crammed into small fishing vessels, and I remembered my students. It was not until this day that I learned the tremendous odds against getting into a boat and the even slimmer chance of arriving somewhere else alive.

"You have to go through the countryside. It's a distance of around one hundred kilometres. In here, if you drive it just takes you one hour, but in my country it takes you around two or three hours to get to there because the road is very bad. You cannot go in a truck covered up because the police are searching everything. They put checkpoints on the way to go to the countryside. And they check every car. In university, I learned how to speak, to become a teacher you have to learn how to speak, how to deal with people. So it helped me a lot on the way I get to the country, when the police checking the car."

The intricate process of achieving escape made me want to ask about the people who failed, but I wanted to be helpful. "So things you learn in one part of your life may be helpful sometimes in an unusual way..."

"Hopefully it just happens once in your life! For me, I tried to escape five or six times before I was successful. It took seven years. I went to jail twice, but the second time I escaped before they put me in jail. Sometimes you just wait for

three days and they get back to you and say 'OK, the boat cannot get in.' The tide is out. So you go away. But sometimes it's not caused by police influence, it's caused by the engine or something like that. Or there's not enough fuel because the police, they control fuel. For those boats, usually they have to buy it towards the black market and hide it. So to come to escape process, everything has to be right."

"When you get to the shoreline, the difficulty is to hide there overnight because sometimes you have to wait three days, four days, before you can get into the boat. In the daytime, we hide in a nearby house. And the organization, they pay for them. But usually police will search the house at night time. So, at the night time, we move into the forest, and just wait there. If the boat comes, there will be a guy go there and tell them and you will head to the shore. Sometimes the police come, but in the forest it's easy for you to escape. If you are in the house, they just surround it and they catch you."

"In my case, once the police surrounded the place where I hide. Then they shoot me. But I still keep running, and I noticed that the bullets, they hit the trees I just thinking to try to get away, but I'm not afraid of anything."

I could sense my own fear increasing as he talked. He was there, a teacher like me, hiding in the jungle. He and his family had planned this escape for seven years, hiding in the anonymity of a strange neighbourhood. "Were you the first person in your family to leave?"

"Yes."

That must have been quite a strong feeling. Everybody expecting you to help them?

"Yes."

A lot of responsibility.

"When you decide to leave the country, that means you accept death. Because even you get on the boat, everybody know that it doesn't mean you can escape, go to another country. Everybody know what happen on the way to go. For the statistics, they know that for ten boats, only one boat can survive. So when you made the decision that you play with your life, you gamble.

"I think my Boy Scout training also helped. When I was young, I was involved with Boy Scouts and I learned a lot of things. I learned how to recognize

the directions in the forest, how to live in the forest. So I think that it helped me a lot in the process.

"When I finally got in the boat, it took four hours because, even in the ocean, before you get into the ocean you have to pass the river mouth, and usually there are police stationed there. And they are watching you. We were chased by a police boat. One of my friends, the bullet was hit him from this side [pointing to his torso] to the other side. I don't know how he can survive.

"We were on that boat for six days. It was just ten metres long from the head to the tail, and only two or... less than three metres wide. And it's a fishing boat, so it s divided into small areas for the fish. And the people have to get inside it. Usually it carries overweight. We have 120 people on the boat, so not enough room for you to sit...

"And when you were in the boat, water all around, and usually for the boat, they don't have enough equipment. They don't have enough water or food, either. And the captain and the sailors, they just sail it by guessing because it's just a fishing man or something like that. And fishing men they just fish nearby the coast. Now they go outside and there's no map, no instruments, no nothing. And sometimes, just because a guess, the wrong guess, you end up killed, and end up under water. A lot of boats ended up in the water.

"On the way, the back of my boat... started to sink. I am lucky because I am strong, one of the strong guys on the boat. Every two hours, the water level will come right to your nose. You just sit there and the water get into the boat. But because they divide it into three parts, so it just go into the back of the boat. But if it gets full enough, the boat will sink. So only strong people will stay on the back, and we responsible to bail the water out. Almost 24 hours a day, I was in the water. And every two hours we would bail the water.

"I don't remember was I cold or not because you just think you are alive. Most people on the boat nearly died because we don't have enough water. And my friend, when he came to the refugee camp, all his nails he lost."

I asked Dave about the man who was shot.

"If that guy could survive in the water... But maybe just because of that he had no infection. I think he lives in the United States now."

* * *

"After six days on the sea, I came to a small island. Its name is Galang and it belongs to Indonesia. And, not only for myself, but I think for everybody on the boat, when you get a foot on the land after a long time on the sea, it feels very, very interesting. I was living there for six months. That was in 1985."

"At that time, there were around eight to ten thousand people living on that island. I think the United Nations rent that island, and they build up a camp just for refugee people. The Vietnamese people, they build up an organization under the direction of the UN, and they run the island."

"Most people wait in that camp for about a year and a half, sometimes longer, before they go to another country. But sometimes it takes longer, like two years or three years if you confuse what country you go to. Like, you have a brother in the United States and you have a sister in Canada. In that case, you in trouble. The country will say: "That country should take you." Then they pass you — like they play soccer — they pass your file between the two of them.

"When I was there, most of the time I spent for study. And at that time I thought maybe I can go to French, so I went to French class every night. During the day, I start teaching at the high school there. Of course, there weren't any stuff or any books for you. And usually we asked the people from the third country to send the books. Because I were a teacher in Vietnam, so it's easy for me to just remember what I was teaching at my level. Then I prepare a lesson for that. I think, until now, they still keep them. Every week I got one can of meat for that!

"In there, the people have to live in a group. They build up a barrack like the army, so around fifty people living in the same barrack. And you get maybe around one metre square for yourself, just enough place for you to lie down at night. I was there by myself, so I have to join with another people to form a four or five person group because they supply a stove — of course an oil stove — and a pot, just one for four or five people. I picked some younger children because, in the boat, I am older than the younger children, but they just left Vietnam by themselves. I keep them and I take care of them, too.

"When I were at the refugee camp, one thing I think that it help me a lot is that I participate with volunteer work, and also I involved with Boy Scouts. I was a Boy Scout leader by that time. I was involved with Boy Scouts from very young. But after '75, the Communists, they didn't allow Boy Scouts. So I continued it when I moved into a refugee camp. We usually have the activity on the weekend, so for the whole week I don't have any spare time. It helped me a lot about my

spirit because, in the people mind, when they come to a refugee camp, they thought OK, they just stay there temporary for a couple of months. Then they can go to another country. And sometimes it doesn't turn out. Two years, three years, and they feel desperate. If you have a lot of time to think about that, it make your spirit worse and worse. Boy Scouts was the best experience for me.

"At that time, there were two countries I thought I can go to. The first could be France because I have one uncle he live in Monaco. The second is United States because I am eligible to go to United States based on my father's history. But to go to United States, I have to have a proof to say that my father work for the government, a paper of my father. And you know that it's very dangerous to carry the paper with me. And so, at that time, I had nothing.

"I went to see the interviewers, and they say they can temporarily accept me in United States. And I sent a letter to my family and asked them to send it here. I couldn't send a letter to them directly from Galang. Most people they send a letter to the third person, if they have any family or, at least, any friends. And from the third country they will send the letter to Vietnam. It's the only way for the government in Indonesia. They don't want to send directly to Vietnam. But it's still very dangerous for my family because they live in hiding and people check the mail.

"At that time, my friend told me that if I were accepted, even temporary, by the United States, I cannot apply to any other countries. So I asked them: "OK, how about when I were waiting for the papers to come here, let me have my status free?" And they agree. And two or three days later, the Canadian government have interviewers. And so I applied for Canada and I was accepted.

"I knew they spoke two languages in Canada: English and French. That's why I applied to come here. But when I got an interview, I were in the refugee camp only three weeks. I had to learn to questionnaire for the interviewers, about Canada. But I didn't know any words in English at that time. I learned some English for that. When I answered the questions, so they were half in English and half in French.

"After they interview you, you can know right away if you are accepted or not. For me, I was accepted, but I still scared at that time because, after that, a lot of my friends asked me where I want to go in Canada. I say anywhere because, in my mind, I don't have any specific place to go. But then, after that, I know a lot of my friends in Boy Scouts went to Toronto, and they wrote a letter to me and

said that maybe I would go to Quebec because I answered the questions in French. And then, two weeks before I left the refugee camp, they called me to sign a letter. In there, they have **EDM.** That stand for Edmonton. I carry that word around the refugee camp, and ask people they know something about Canada what **EDM** stand for. Because they know Toronto, they know Quebec, they know Vancouver. But for **EDM**, nobody know about that. So they thought somewhere in the North Pole!

"We had some information displayed in the refugee camp about every country, but not very clear. In my mind, I thought that Canada people is something like Eskimo. Eskimo people live in an ice house and the people only working half year: six months and, in the winter, everybody have to stay in the house. Because that's what we know. In Canada, they have six months winter and six months summer. My friend in Boy Scouts, he taught me how to knit a scarf. He said, "OK. In the summer, if you can find another work, you work. But, in the winter, you have to find a work to support you." So this is some kind of work — to knit!"

* * *

"I arrived in Canada in January 1986. It surprised me when I went to Vancouver because we don't have any winter coat. So my clothes are summer clothes — just a t-shirt, a jacket, a pants — but just for summer. And, at that time, even in winter, it's not cold compared to Edmonton, but it's still cold, so they have to have an emergency at the airport to supply some winter clothes for me and other people.

"When I arrived at the Edmonton airport, a group of people from Catholic Social Services went to the airport to pick up everyone. And they drove us to the Pan Am Motel. On the way we went to the motel from the airport, on the two side only the field. There wasn't any houses. And even when we got into the city, I couldn't see outside, so I thought maybe some kind of farm! I was a little bit shocked even though I know that I prepare myself to go anywhere. I know Canada is a country six months winter, six months summer.

"The people from Catholic Social Services helped us to sign the papers, to open the account—those activities for life, to go to Manpower to apply to study English. They gave us orientation. I cannot imagine what happen if I came to a foreign country and there's nobody to help me do anything. Very soon, I went to Catholic School, just for temporary to learn English. And later, I went to the Job

School for five months. Because I was government-sponsored, I received money from the government for one year.

"When I went to that ESL programme, at that time I think my grammar was very good because I spent a lot of time on grammar. And when I write, I make the sentence very clearly. And when I speak, the teacher understand me. But after I went to TECH, I know that just because my ESL teacher she have a very good listening and maybe very good guessing skill! It really frustrated me when I just went outside and meet another person. When I say something, they answer me, "What?", with a high voice. So it make me, in my mind say OK, they don't understand anything I say, so I afraid to speak. I don't think after five months it is enough prepare for people to go to work.

"I wanted to stay in school. The Manpower counsellor they want me to go to work. It's very hard for me to find a job, I think. Because my English, I don't think it's enough. Maybe it's easy to find a job just like a janitor. But then I know that one of my friends, he's a janitor, and most of the time he's dealing with uneducated people. And sometimes they yell at him and they use very bad words. He is really upset, but nothing he can do because he need a job. That is the culture. In my country, usually people don't use bad words, but if you hear people swear each other, that mean after that they fighting. But here, they just yell and swear at you. And, in my opinion, if you don't know any English, so you don't understand what they say. Maybe it's better for you. If you know what they say, it make you really upset. But the main reason for me to make that decision is that I am the only one in my family to come to Canada, and I want to sponsor my family. And with the wage of a janitor I cannot sponsor anyone, so I have to be successful.

"I want to go to school, but of course I don't have in mind what kind of school is right for me because the only experience for me that is teaching school in physics. And here, to teach, I have to speak English very fluently. And my friends, they say studying in Canada it's not easy. And also, with my English, it's not enough to go to school. But fortunately, at that time, I involved the Boy Scouts in Canada, and one of the leaders in my troop, he say it should be OK. If I try my best, I can get over every problem. But my English not enough for phoning and find out what is the programme going on in the school, right? So he drove me to apply because I don't know the directions in here, and I don't have any car. He took me to a lot of schools: the university, Friendly College and TECH. At that time, I applied for everywhere. But the problem with the

univeristy was I have to have TOEFL, and I want to continue on my school as soon as possible. And with TOEFL it's not something for you to get it for a month or two months. Friendly College said it's OK for me to get into the school because I have a degree in physics. So the only thing they require is English 30. But then, I write an exam at TECH, and I was accepted there in the upgrading programme. It would begin in September.

"My friend helped me to find a way to get the money. At first, I went to the AVT [Alberta Vocational Training Allowance] and applied for the money from there. They said I was not eligible to get that money because I have to live in Canada for a year. They advised me to ask for a loan. And I applied for a loan, and I got the money.

"The first few days at TECH, in my opinion, I didn't think the programme is easy for me because I know my English was not enough to understand the professors in the class. That's why I bought a cassette recorder. However, when I got home and listened to the tape, I couldn't hear anything, just the noise of the people turning pages over or moving chairs. I asked one of my friends. He had been here long enough — more than ten or fifteen years — and he told me that my cassette recorder was a cheap one, so it couldn't pick up the voice very clear. And you know that I borrowed the money from the government, so my finance was very tight. I couldn't afford to buy an expensive one. Now the only way I could do was to study the lesson beforehand, that is, before the class. But I was really confident about my knowledge in science. That include math., physics, and even chemistry. I'm not bad on that field either.

"One day, in the physics class, the instructor give out an exercise. And the problem is for a car move to a different direction after a few turns. And he asked me to apply the "ruler technique" to find the final displacement. I never heard that word before. In my country there is no technique like that! So I applied my knowledge in the exam. Because they gave out the directions and the angle, so I used the /pitagor/ theory to..."

Peter Gore?

"Like it's used to calculate in the triangle, based on an angle and the size..."

Oh! Pythagorean!

"Yeah."

You're using the French word, Pythagore. In English, you say Pythagoras.

"Oh, Pythagoras."

You're calculating with triangles. Now I understand.

"And apply the SIN and COSIN to calculate, if it wasn't a right angle. It was about four or five turns, so that means I had to calculate four or five times using that theory. I remember, I only finished two. Then people they hand in the exercise. And I thought: 'Oh my God, those guys were really good!' So I thought because when I continue even I don't have enough English, but the only thing I can count on was my knowledge in science. And now...!"

"And the teacher asked: 'OK, everybody hand in.'

"And when he got to my exercise, he called me and he asked me what do I apply in here? And I told him — it's very hard for me to explain to him because my English — but he understood what I was doing.

"And he said: 'I asked you to apply the ruler technique to do it.'

"And he look at me, and really — maybe my face at that time showed something really strange.

"And he asked me: 'Do you have a ruler?'

"I said yes. And he asked me to take it, and then he showed me the ruler technique. That mean after you draw it, just put the ruler from the beginning up to the end and use the scale. That is one of my impressions of the first few days."

* * *

"In mathematics class, one day I brought a calculator — that's a computer pocket — they required to buy one at TECH. So, I bought it. And when I tried to figure out how to use the functions in the pocket computer, I opened the book and I read on the chapters for SIN, COS and exclamation..."

Some kind of function?

"OK, if 5!, that means 5 x 4 x 3 x 2 x 1."

Oh, really?

"And I forgot the word for that.

"At that time, my teacher showed me to go over that, and he asked me: 'Do you understand what they say on the book? How they calculate on the book?'"

"And I say yes.

"And he asked me why I was in this class.

"And I told him just because of English. For that upgrading programme, after you finish it, I think the highest is not really — in my country with my programme level, just equal to first semester on Grade 12."

So this was still pretty basic stuff?

"Yeah. And that's why he thought, OK, why I understand every stuff like that, but I took upgrading. I said: 'Just because English.'

"And once he gave out a problem on the board, and I just looked at that problem and I know right away, almost right away, the answer. And he look at me and he say: 'Can you prove it?'

"And I say yes. Then I came up to the board and just analysed what I did to get the result. And at that time to explain something I didn't have enough words to say."

But you could use the blackboard?

"Yeah. I only used two words to explain the whole problem. That's 'this' and 'that'. I just wrote down the equation. Then, I point out the numbers. I say: 'If this equal that, then that equal this. And so, this equal this!'"

I see! Did they understand?

"Can you understand someone else explain the problem like that? I don't think so! But of course, for the teacher, he didn't need my explanation to understand what I wrote on the board, right? He just look at that and he know I solve the problem. But for the class, I only used two words: 'this' and 'that'."

And "equals"!

"Yes. Oh! Three words! And after I solved the problem, I looked at him. I knew that because I used 'this' and 'that', it means nothing, but I didn't have any more words to say.

"And I looked at him, and he smiled and he said: "Good. The problem you solved very logic. But the only thing I didn't know that mean what were 'this' and what were 'that!'

"I know he just joke."

* * *

"But after two months, I was really confident I could finish that programme."

What about the English?

"Even the English is not hard for me because for the whole first semester they only taught about grammar and punctuation. I always get around 90% or 95% on the exams!"

I see. Did the English teacher recognize that you needed help with speaking and listening and vocabulary?

"Not really at all. On the first English class, the teacher said to the class, because at that time there were two students in class with black hair: 'OK, I know you guys was English as a second language, but if when you stay in this class, I assume that you are Canadian and your English is good like Canadian. Don't come to me and say you are foreign students. Because if you don't have English, you can't get into this class!' After I heard that sentence, it make me worried a couple of days.

"But actually that teacher helped me a lot. When I have a conversation with him, he quite careful on listening. And when he spoke to me, he spoke very slowly. In the first semester, the English course focus on grammar and punctuation, so the teacher just give out the sentences and the students analysed those sentences. Sometimes I didn't understand all of the words in the sentence, but just because I know where is the subject, where is the verb. And I could pass the exam very easy."

Did any of the other teachers help you? I mean there must have been a general recognition that you needed some help with English.

"Now I know that they have a group of counsellors, so the students can get advice from them. But at that time, first, my English is not good enough to speak alone with another Canadian people and, second, in my culture, when you get into postsecondary school, you go by yourself."

You didn't ask for help?

"That was a mistake I made when I went into first year. Because if I talk to the counsellor, they don't require you take all of the courses. You can take some

later on. It make the programme a little longer, but it's easy for you to complete successful all of the courses. In my country, we don't have that."

So that was available at that time but you just didn't know about it?

"No."

Did you have an advisor that you worked with at TECH? Someone you could talk to — or a cousellor that was assigned to you?

"No. The way they work is if you need, you can go there to meet them. If you need help, someone will help you. But they don't help you unless you ask for it. I think that's reasonable."

Were there other students in the programme who had similar needs to yours? Other people with English as a second language?

"Yes, but there were few Vietnamese people. I don't know about other immigrants, but there were few Vietnamese people at that time. Usually they stay here at least three or four years before they start the programme. Even their English, in my opinion, it's still not enough, but at least better than me. At least they understand what the teacher say.

"But mostly I looked after myself. And I really confident, and I was successful because I received the award from the Provincial Government, with a little bit of money! After the first semester, I got the top in school in physics, but for English I got only 80%.

"And it become lower on the second semester, because on the second semester the English programme now they focus on presentations and writing. They teacher give out the topic and you have five minutes to think about that and write down. That was hard because my grammar was OK, but to write an essay it require a lot of vocabulary. And the topic is given out by the teacher, not me. If I chose the topic, I would choose something easy for me!

"This time my teacher, I think he help me a lot. He not treat me like Canadian. If he treat me like Canadian, maybe I didn't pass the course. But he make the thing easy for immigrant. That mean for the essay he limit the deductible points for grammar and for vocabulary. So on one paragraph, he told: 'OK, ten percent maximum for vocabulary, ten percent for grammar.' And after he correct my paragraph, if I have more than five, it doesn't count."

When you think back to it, do you think there was anything they could have done that would have helped you more in the English class to become more successful and feel more confident?

"In my understanding, unless they have some special programme only for immigrants — I don't mean only for Vietnamese, but only for immigrants — in that case, maybe they can design a programme suitable for this kind of people."

You don't think any of the Canadian students had problems with their English and that they could have used help, too?

"Actually, in the first semester, my mark in English is higher than Canadian people."

So maybe it wasn't productive for you to be studying that stuff. Maybe you could have been studying something else that could have been more useful for you.

"Yes. But in my class over thirty people. Only two immigrants. So a programme to run for that class they couldn't make it better just for helping only two students."

Why were there only two immigrants in that class? Maybe that's also part of the problem, that it's difficult for immigrants to come into the programme. So you were one of the lucky people. And there were only two.

"But unless they have one special programme only for immigrants..."

What if they had an English Centre where people could go for help — Canadians or immigrants? After class or maybe as part of the library?

"I wish there was a programme something like that because, even I success on that programme, but that didn't mean I don't need any help. Just because I don't know any programme that's available at that time. In my opinion, I think that often immigrant people they already have their background in science. So there is no problem for them to study science. And usually they spend most of their time to study English about the science.

"The process to study English about science and the process to study English for express yourself, it's very different. People, like my teacher, always tell me that I should use the English-English dictionary. But, at that time, to look for a word, then I find about three or four words. Then I have to look at the meaning for those words. So the process to understand the meaning of one word, it take a long time. So, it's better for me just to use English and Vietnamese. And the problem is — for

that kind of dictionary — sometimes the meaning is not correct. And another thing, sometimes it's correct but, you know in English the meaning for the word it depends on the situation or the sentence or the case. So it take time. I don't know which one... And if there is someone — if I ask my friend, he cannot explain very clear the meaning — so if there is a centre where we can get help in a specific area, that's really good. I think it will help more immigrants to be confident to get into TECH because, in my experience, by the time I made a final decision, it was really hard because a lot of people said my English was not enough."

"When I got into first year, I think the main problem is that some or a lot or most of the teachers at TECH, they don't know what was my case. But what was the case for immigrants? One of my teachers ask me: "If I need help for English, why don't I go for tutoring?" There is some tutors open in TECH at that time, and they cost $15 per hour.

"I say I couldn't afford that kind of money.

"She asked me: 'Why don't you ask support from your family?' So that means she didn't know anything about my situation. Because she thought immigrants are like visa students. And visa students — that means people who have money."

What about the shape of the programme? I'm thinking because you had so much background already in physics, and there were a lot of concepts that you were familiar with, if they might not be another format to the programme to help people like you?

"The thing is — because even now I still have a problem with English — if I can spend time because I already know about the science, so I don't need to study all of it. I really say that. It didn't help me because what I studied in upgrading, that was what I have taught when I was a teacher in my country. So if there is some kind of programme to teach us to apply English in science, and also to spend more time in English, it really help."

Had you had many experiences talking to native speakers of English before you went to TECH? Aside from English teachers?

"None! So on my side, I have a wall. I don't prepare myself. I afraid to communicate with people. I think that one of the problems because it seemed that people looked at me like a stranger."

* * *

"I remember on the first chemistry class, when we needed to go to the laboratory, I knew that now I was in trouble. Because I had to take the equipment on the list. I didn't know which one was which and I had to go there and take it by myself, and then set up everything and do the exercise and follow the instructions from my teacher in the lab room. So I went to another person in the class, a Canadian. Now I had to ask help from the other students. I wasn't afraid to do the experience, but just want to know what equipment and what the teacher want me to do! I went to another person in the class and I asked: 'Could I become your partner?'

"He told me that he already have a partner. And I went to another person. I tried another person and the same thing happened, but later I knew that he went to ask another Canadian guy in class to become his partner. So I knew, OK, now I was by myself. So I used the list and for the first lab I had to stay there late. But then, another class will come into the room. So I skipped my next class and just stay in the lab to watch the next class come to do the lab.

"But after a couple of months, people — like the other student in the class — they come back to me, and that guy he came back to me and asked me to become his partner because I get very high marks. And also, by that time, almost everybody in the class they knew that I was really top in science. Even the teacher, when he solved the problem in the class, after he solved it, usually he just get far away to look at the whole thing and to double check to see the results is good. But now when he solve it, he just look at me and I just smiled or nod my head. The he said: 'It's OK. I don't have to check it again.'"

* * *

"There was one guy, one old guy. He just around 32, but he looked old, and he told me that he quit school after high school. That's more than ten years. So now he got a problem, got a trouble to follow the programme in class. He asked me to teach him physics, chem. and math..

"At first, I just taught him about math., and we learned about division. Just basic, but after that, we have to learn division to do equations. At first I thought, OK, I would learn it the Canadian way. But then, I found out some things you learned when you are really young and it's been in you twenty or thirty years. It's very hard to change! So I thought, and luckily in Upgrading Programme they don't require you to show how you use it. For the problems,

usually you just have to have the right answer. So I think: 'OK, maybe the best way for me is to keep my old way.'

"He didn't learn quickly. Maybe because he left school for a long time, that's why he asked me for help. But after I explained for him, he really like the way I explained it, and after a couple of days he really understood my concept. However, one day I got sick, so I wasn't in school, and he doing some stuff with division. Then he got stuck and he went to a teacher and asked him.

"After looking at the problem, the teacher asked him: 'Where did you learn this stuff?'

"And he said, from me.

"And the teacher said if he wants an explanation, he will explain in the Canadian way. Now he learned the Vietnamese way. He better go back and ask me!

"Since then he asked me to teach him chem. and physics. Some days, he just dropped me to his place and I stayed there overnight to teach him. And that helped me a lot in learning English. Because there was no problem for me to solve the problem. But sometimes in physics and chem., I have to answer the question, like the concept and the definition. And if I didn't teach him, maybe I wouldn't memorize the words. I improved my English and I think he improved his listening, too! I worked with him until finishing the Upgrading Programme.

"After that he took Instrumentation. Because he was working on that before for ten years, then he hurt his back and he was on Compensation. So the company told him that after he finish the programme — doesn't matter if it's one year, two years or four or five — after he finish he get back. There's a place for him to work. Otherwise the company have to pay the compensation because he got hurt when he was working."

* * *

How did you choose Computer Science? You could have chosen other courses. You were interested in engineering before and you could have gone into Engineering Technology.

"Because computer it translates in Vietnamese language — it has the meaning something small, really small, to do with math. and physics. So I thought — I knew about computer games, I love to play games — that is the right field for me to get in because something small to do with physics and math. And

physics — oh! a piece of cake for me — and math., there is no problem because I know physics. At that time they required very high marks in physics and math. and English. So I say: 'OK, they require three subjects and I am very good in two of them. So I spend all the time on English.' So I go over the programme very easily. That's how I choose.

"Also, a guy in my class he works with computers. He said they are suitable for me. I don't ask him about what is computer, what is the language because it's very hard to explain to someone who doesn't know anything about computers. He just say that computer it really require math., and physics for logic. So I say it should be OK, and I think computers is a very open field in the future."

But you didn't talk to a counsellor about which programme you wanted to take?

"No. In my culture, other than my parents give me an idea, I don't ask anyone about the idea."

Where did you feel you got the most personal support while you were at TECH? You didn't have your family or anyone supporting you. Where did you feel you got help?

"I think the only thing is — that my family is practical. I always talk to myself. I make it. I make it. For my family and for myself. Because here I meet one of my students. In Canada. And I cannot fail because when that student ask me what I was doing at that time, I said: 'Go to school.' And at that time I was in Upgrading and she told me: 'That's really easy for you.' Because she asked me what kind of stuff I took. And I said what I teach her in Vietnam. For my friends, they know that I have some background in Vietnam, and some of them say my English is not enough. But I still go on with my own decision. So if now I fail, they win and I lose face. And I afraid. Maybe I don't know about Canadian people culture but in my culture it's really a bad situation to lose face."

How would you describe your experience at TECH? Did you feel you were successful or were you struggling there?

"Of course, right now if I talk about my past I can say I am successful. Because if I don't have a diploma, I don't get the job right now. When people told me that I really good — I can go through the Computers Programme and can start at TECH when I was here only eight months, that really surprised people. I feel a little bit proud of myself. So I can say that is my opinion after I graduated.

But when I was at TECH, sometimes I feel lonely, sometimes I feel desperate just because I afraid I cannot make my promotion with myself. So sometimes I could not sleep at night, just thinking: did I make the right decision to go to school other than go to work? Because you know that the main thing — the bottom line — is I want to sponsor my family."

* * *

"As you know, I didn't have any work experience in Canada. And since I decided to continue my education, I just thought: OK, go step by step. So before I graduate I just think now I try to finish the school — graduate from the school — and from that, when I have the diploma, when I am thinking about the next step. So that when I was at school, honestly I really don't spend much time to prepare for work.

"There's a funny story. Remember the guy I tutored in Upgrading? I met him again. And he told me that he still has one more year to go. And after he graduate, he will have work right away because the company offered him that job. And he asked me: 'What about you?' And, at that time, I still only have a few months to go. So I graduate before him. And I said: 'Oh! The same with me. I have another company to offer me a job. And they say it doesn't matter how long I spend in school, as long as I have a diploma!'

"I was just joking with him, but he very excited and he say: 'Oh! Congratulations! That's very good for you!' And he ask me what company it was. And I said: 'Boston Pizza. They offered me cooking!'

"He said 'Come on! Let's be serious!' And I said 'No, I really don't think about where I can go to work and how I can get work before I graduate.' After my graduation, I know it's hard to get a job."

* * *

"Some of the guys in my class they have a job, just a summer job. And some of them — like one guy I know — his father have a shop to sell computers, so he just work for his father, but of course he didn't put on his resume the shop owner is his father. The most important thing is those guys don't have a problem with English, so they can sell themselves.

"I tried to apply a job everywhere. I just applied everywhere because the way to find a job here is different from my country. I don't have any experience like that before. In my country, when I graduate, I already have a job.

"It cost me a lot of money because they want the resume on the good type paper and, when I mailed them, I have to put them into the oversized envelope. So it's about a dollar something for a resume, and I just send out, every time, ten or twenty resumes. I spent arount two months to send resumes like that.

"At the same time, I have to pay back my loan. It's almost $10,000. You can ask the government to support you if you cannot find a job at that time, ask for interest release. But they have a limit on it. After the time is over, you have to pay interest. And that mean study in here is like you invest. And if you fail or if you make the wrong decision, it put you in a big problem. I just cut off my spending. I start to worry about how to get a job because the longer the harder for a chance to find a job, and I begin to consider the about the best way to find a job.

"Actually, I got one interview, and I know that my English was not enough. When they interview me, when they give me the problem to solve there is no problem. At that time, I met one of my classmates. And when he go out, he asked me: 'OK, what's the problem to solve?' And I answered him right away. So, for me, it should be OK to have an interview like that. But then, after I finished the solution, there were three people to interview me. The personnel officer, he just talk about something outside — any topic. Then I get a problem. Some questions it's very different from my culture. Like they asked me how to mark — they give me a scale of one to ten — my personality for that scale. I understand the question, but I don't know how to answer it because, in my country, nobody ask people that kind of question. So then I paused for a while and told them that, for my personality, I think it's better to let the other people evaluate me. But he just say: 'No. Now I want you to evaluate yourself on a scale of one to ten. Just put it in.' So I just picked a number but, after that question, I feel not comfortable any more. That was the only interview I had then.

"I went to Canada Employment and I saw a job — a programmer's job — for $8.00 per hour. So I went there to apply for it. Then they say: 'No, this job only for people who receive UIC. Not for people outside.'

"After two months I went to a centre to help people find a job. Usually for that centre, they just help you to do a resume. But my resume is fine. A couple of weeks later, they phoned back and they say: 'OK, there's another programmer job out there. You can go and apply for it.' But just $6.00 per hour. I don't go and apply for it. I think I better have my English improvement, and also I have to prepare some tricky questions for the interview.

"I tried to get used to that question because — you know that — some question is really different from my culture. From that and I prepared the questions ahead of time — tried to read it. And that is the time that I go to ESL school to ask for some special kind of training. I went to the Job School, but at that time they don't have any special course like that. And I went to the Literacy Centre. I asked for them, and they referred me to the ESL class. And I told them: 'OK, I already took ESL. Now I just want a special class — some kind of special class to suit my needs.' And I told them I already have a diploma in Computers, so I just need something to help with the interview. They said: 'Oh, in that case, we don't have anything.'

"By that time, I went to Catholic Social Services (CSS). I referred by my friend's father. He told me he go to an ESL class, but just one by one or small group. And it's really helpful. So that give me an idea. OK, why should I go somewhere else to ask, so I just go direct to CSS and ask for help. It was really helpful because, I remember at that time, the teacher working with me for the interview, and fixing my pronunciation and give me a chance to listen back to my tape. After that, I got my first job.

"I got it through Canada Employment, one of those jobs where the government pays part and the company pays part for six months. For the advertising, they didn't say that. They said they require a programmer working with Assembler, but they will provide training. So I went and applied for it. At first, they asked me to sign a paper. And when I look at the form it was the form to get the subsidy from Canada Employment. I thought it should be OK. So I just sign it. Then they just give me three thousand codes for Assembler.

"It was very hard to understand. And because they work as a contract with the other company, so the more programmes I fix, the more money they get. So that's why they give me the programme and they give me two books about Assembler. I learned it at work. I brought it home. I worked like eighteen hours a day. They paid me $8.00 per hour, but that includes $4.00 they get from the government, so they only pay me $4.00. But I don't mind. At that time, I just think this is something to test me. And I say to myself I can get over it. So I learned Assembler Code in only a week. Even I borrowed my friend's books from TECH.

"Then I look at the programme and I can understand it. That programme it controls the cache in the computer system. And now I have to make the programme more efficient and shorter. And to do that, I have to know about the

system. Not only Assembler, but also the hardware. And I come back to the guy in the office and I tell him about that, and he gave me a book about the hardware. And I go over it for a couple of days. Then he told me if I need help, just ask. But the way they work, he just come by and it's very hard to see him. And every time he come by, he ask me: 'How much programme, how much line did you finish?' Every time I meet him, he ask me that question.

"I have to answer it: 'I'm still on training. It's only more than a week to learn a language and to learn the hardware!'

"And he say: 'OK, if you have a question, just ask me or ask the other programmers.' There were three people at that time. But they get money the more work they do, so they don't want to accept me. They don't want to show me how to do it. Wasting time! Why am I the only person get the money per hour? They say: 'Ask him. Ask the boss.'

"And I come back to ask my boss, and — it's very hard to say — because if you don't know the hardware very well, you don't know the solution to make a programme work more efficiently. So if you don't know that part, you don't know what question you should ask. And he come back every day when he sees me and says: What are you working on? What are you up to?'

"Finally, I told him: On the posting, you said that you provide full training. But since I come here, I didn't get any training on it.'

"He told me: 'Yeah. That's the training I provide to you. You need books, I give you books. And if you have questions, just ask. That is the training.' I was confused. I talked with my friend, too, and he say if I work with that company, there is no future for me. It's some kind of rip off people. So I decide to quit after three weeks. I never received any money, but I learned an experience."

* * *

"After that, I worked part-time with publishing and I try to find another job, and I worked with the teacher at CSS for the interview. I come back to TECH, and I saw a posting, so I applied for it. And I came back to my instructor, and she referred me to a few jobs. And maybe the right time come. I have one interview from TECH for a temporary job. I have two other interviews: one with the City of Edmonton and one with a small company. And the one right now, that's with the federal government.

"My instructor referred me to the job with the government. And this time I learned something. I take the resume and I went direct to the office, and also I asked—because my instructor knows the name of the person—I also asked to see directly the person, and I gave my resume to him. And I used everything I think is right. The next day, I phoned him to remind him. Then I had an interview and, after that, I sent him a follow-up letter.

"It wasn't simple to get that job. With the interview, since the teacher prepared for me the questions, it's OK for me to answer the questions. And then, it turn out after I receive a notice from him that I was accepted. But they required I have to be a Canadian citizen to accept the job.

"I had applied for citizenship and I put my change of address form for them before that. But they still send to the old address. That means I haven't received it, and I missed the hearing. And they say: 'OK, you have to pay the fees and apply again.' So that's why the process is very long. I talked to my boss, and he help me, he leave the position open. He phoned the other department to talk about my case.

"I was upset, so I went back to the teacher at Catholic Social Services for help. I showed her my calendar. I kept track of every time I had talked to the people in Citizenship. She phoned the MP, and I notice that when I show up at the Citizenship Office they really — the way they look — it's really upset about me because I phoned and a lot of people phoned. I think, for the MP, they did phone and they did complain about that. The secretary of the MP, she went to Ottawa and she got my file. She told me the day after that and I receive a letter to have an interview. And after I have interview, fours days later they set me up for the hearing.

"At that time I think: 'OK. Now if I don't have the citizenship, that means my job, too.' So I have to pass it. And I know that maybe now they will try to give me a hard time in the hearing. So I spent the whole day to learn like an exam. I learned everything!

"At the hearing, the judge asked if I studied. And it's my habit, even I study it a lot, but I just say 'a little bit': 'Yeah, a little bit.'

"And she say: 'If you studied a little bit, then you couldn't answer the question.'

"Then she asked me a question, a lot of questions. I only missed one question about the symbol of Canada. I missed that question. But then she

showed me a nickel. And they have a beaver on it. It remind me right away. She asked me about the name of the party leaders. That's quite difficult because usually I know the name of the parties. But for the leader, I only know the prime minister. But now I know all of them. She also asked me the provinces and the capitals.

"So, on the same day, after the hearing, I just go directly across to the other office to see my boss and say: "OK. I have the Canadian citizenship!""

* * *

You were now qualified. It was quite a long, involved process, but some of the work that you did—like the documentation of the dates that you communicated with people—really paid off. And also, you learned some strategies for talking to people, how to get to the right person, how to prepare and do follow-up for an interview.

"Yes."

You learned a lot very quickly about how to find a job. Compared to at the beginning when you were sending out resumes to wallpaper Edmonton! That's quite a big change, when you think about it. Over how much time?

"Three months."

I'm wondering if you think that the schools like the one that you went to — like the Job School and TECH — are answering the needs of people in your community or in the immigrant community generally. Do you think people are well-served by those programmes?

"I think the main key is ESL, because to get into another training, if you have been well-prepared. It make you a lot of easy to pass to the other programme."

Well, it does for some people but, on the other hand, I've met some people who aren't that interested in learning English. They really want to learn something else. Maybe they want to learn a job or maybe they want to get back in — like you did. You didn't want to waste time studying more ESL. You wanted to go back to school.

"No. I mean, OK, you don't spend most of the time to learn ESL because language is not something you catch up overnight. It is something you learn day by day, and maybe, for me, I think I have to learn it the whole of my life. But the

way I'm talking now, it is to make the ESL programme in the short time, but it will provide some of language needs for people to get into the other programmes."

"If there is some programme, they also teach ESL but, before they teach them, some kind of evaluate person. Not everyone want to go to the same kind of programme. Like, for me, I'm referred to go back to study because I have some sort of background but for people if they have a background as a carpenter, they want to do that work. And some people they just want to work if they don't have background in study."

So you're saying that counselling is important?

"Yes, but then, after the counselling, they should have a programme to suit."

So there should be a way for the schools to listen about what people need, and to respond to that, based on the counselling that's provided? A network?

"Yes. If I go for ESL for five months, instead of learning English just for every topic, general English, if they focus it into the field I want to go, it's exactly I learn English, but learn the field I want to go."

Well, that's interesting, but I'm thinking not just about English, but also education, because there are lots of people who don't have that much English, but maybe want to get training for a job. I've met some people in the Vietnamese community, too. They've been here for three or four years, and they don't speak very much English. They're not interested in learning that much English, but they need some training. What do you think about providing training for some people in Vietnamese and English? Do you think that would be worthwhile to think about, in terms of tailoring programmes for some learners?

"That should help a lot. It's really a good idea. I don't know if they can make it or not, but it's a really good idea because some jobs you just need skill, you don't need English. But that means you have to have a network to link between your training programme and your workplace. Otherwise, if you just put your force on the training, then after the training you don't have success. And I think you get worse results."

It's demoralizing for people?

"Yeah, because sometimes people they encourage themselves to learn, then they get the same result: no work and no hope. It makes their spirit less than before they get the programme."

If you could think about or start your life over again in Canada — rewrite your story in Canada — how would you change what happened in your education and training here to help you?

"OK. Now I just based on my own experience. First, if when I get into here, if the ESL programme reflect my needs — the field I want to study — it will help me a lot."

So, you needed counselling before you went into ESL. All right.

"And after, someone could give me the right idea, not just someone tell me: 'Go to work!' Someone have to work close with immigrant people because, in my culture, usually after we get into college, we work by our own and follow our opinion only. Cause there's no such kind of help in my country [counselling]. So let people know about that kind of help in Canada."

People have to learn about that kind of help, too?

"It's a good thing to have some because if they just think people to get to work after one year get the living adjustment, they throw people to work, of course some very low job that's not secure. And after a few months, or at least after they finish receiving funding from the subsidy, they will kick those people out. And since that time, maybe six months or one year later, those people don't have enough skill, enough English to find another job. So they end up to social assistance. I know there are some training programmes, but if they consider — like for me — if they train me about something in physics, I don't have to go to three or four years of school because I already have a degree."

So you think your programme could have been much shorter if they had paid attention to your training?

"Yeah. And if they open a training for a carpenter, and a lot of people they have their back experience, they just take a couple of months, and if they have work, they will do a good job."

What do you think about paying for training? What we are talking about here is very expensive. Do you think that people should pay more for their own training, should it be more on a loan basis or do you think that government should continue to pay? I know you did both. You had government support for a year, but then you paid for your own education at TECH.

"That's one thing I should mention. Something is funny in here. I know some people they get welfare. And after they get welfare for three or four years, the counsellor come to them and say: 'OK, we will pay for you to go to training.' And usually the person, they refuse to get training because they receive welfare long enough. They don't want to have any training because it doesn't guarantee them anything. But for me, when I come and ask for training, I went to AVT (Alberta Vocational Training). And they say I am not eligible for training because I just live here for eight months. And for my case, I really demand on myself, so I keep go on by loan from the government. But a lot of people give up just by that answer. And usually, people think about go back to study, that means they have something on their background. So it makes the time. Instead of training a person sit on welfare, they don't have any training, you spend a lot of time. Why shouldn't you think about training this kind of people? They willing, they eager to learn. They willing to study. And of course, they have something to count on."

Well, you took a student loan. And did you pay it back already?

"Yes, but you know, a student loan is not much money. And it's really hard to live on with that kind of money. I don't mind if I have to loan the money from the government, but if I receive another support from it help me balance with the living costs. For me, I'm really lucky because, at that time, my family really support me. Usually people from Vietnam have a responsibility to their family. They have to send money to support them, even with a student loan. They really push themselves to go back to school, but then their family just send them a letter to say they need the support. So now they have to drop school and find a job, go to work."

So how do you feel about that?

"Really bad because, of course, they will go back in a circle. They find a job and it's not a secure job. And after they work, then they send the money to their family. They settle down and sometime, somehow they lose that job. And with the economy right now, it's hard to find another job and they end up to social assistance."

So, if you were a counsellor working with those people when their family was putting so much pressure on them, what would you tell them to do?

"It depends on the kind of family they coming from, what they are thinking. The only thing I can suggest is just send a letter and explain their situation right now, and just continue their education. When the summer comes, at that time,

they can try to find a job and, by that time, if they have money, they can send it back to their family. I know that some families they don't accept that. Sometimes just because the case they really need the money right now to survive. In that case, there is no choice.

"And one thing I find out, I know some friends, some of them even don't have jobs. They don't receive the financial assistance (that means welfare). I told them: 'OK, just get the money from the Social Assistance if you really need it. Then try to find a job. Because if you don't have money, you don't have even some to buy a bus ticket, then how can you find a job?'"

So it seems to me — because I hear you saying on the one hand that some people don't apply but they could use some help, and on the other hand some people get help but they take advantage of the system – that we need to think about this area and offer enough help without letting people take advantage.

"If I go to welfare, it's better for me to say: 'OK, I just need money.' And it's easy for them to sign a form and they send me money. Other than I say: 'OK, I want to go back to school. I want to study. Is there any way you can help?' No way. And they can make my case harder."

I think this is very cultural, too, because there are lots of people who do the very same thing, but they don't phrase it the same way. What some people will do, and what I usually coach people to do if they are in this situation, is not to say: 'I want to go back to school. I really need money' but to say: 'You know, now I'm unemployed. It's so terrible. The only way I'll be able to get a job is if I get more training.'

"Oh, yeah."

But, you see, when the social worker hears this, they hear a completely different story. They don't hear: 'I want to go back to school. I need money.' They hear that the only way that this person is going to get a job is if they go back to school. It could be the same person, but saying the story a different way. And they get treated a completely different way.

"So before I go to that person, I will go to you first!"

That's what I'm saying about the value of counselling. I mean, whose side is the counsellor on? Is their job to help the client or to look at how much money the government is spending? I think there are people who go in and they say just what you said, and the social worker says: 'Why should the government pay for

you to go to school?' Fifteen minutes later, another person comes in and says: 'Oh, I'm unemployed. It's been so long. The only way I can get a job is if I improve my training. Then I'll be able to join the workforce.' And the counsellor thinks: 'Oh, what a responsible person! Really trying to help himself.'

"I see your point. So the word 'counsellor' should make a difference if they have the right kind of counsellor."

I know that some people have very few choices, and part of the problem is they haven't talked to someone to get advice. So they are just like you, sitting in a room and trying to make a choice, and not knowing what all the rules are. That's a very difficult situation to be in. And many people are in that situation: trying to do the right thing with little information.

"And another person, they don't receive social assistance, so that means they have to find a job. And luckily, after a few jumps, he can get a job—not a well-paying job, but enough for him to have his life. Now he don't go back to school any more because he's just thinking: 'Loan the money from the government.' And he has a car now, and a wife. How can he support it?"

So it might be cheaper, in the long run, to help him when he first asks for help than to send him to work and then try to help with a car and a house and a wife and kids?

"Yes. And, based on my experience, at first I didn't require anything. I was in the hard situation when they refuse to give me money. I have to go for a loan. But even that — and in the winter I have to walk to school — I don't complain about anything if there is no serious trouble for me. But if they said to me now: 'OK, live on $400 a month and go to school', even I don't loan, I can't do it. Even if I try hard, nobody can do it. So if you want to go and study, do it right the first time, when you haven't get used to things."

So maybe, in the life of an immigrant, there's kind of a critical period when we can do something to help people? When we can spend the least money and provide the most help?

"Yeah. Other than, after that, you just sit back with the problem."

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Over several conversations and many kinds of tea, I began to feel that I was not listening to a story, but to Dave's song. It begins, not in words, but in the rhythmic energy of change in his life, borne in a melody which is, at first hearing,

reedy and soft like wind in bamboo, and only later appreciated by western ears as it returns over and over again to memory.

Dave talks about traditional Vietnamese values and how many of them seem lost in Canada. Sometimes he says that he finds Canadians more helpful and supportive than his own people. I wonder about the context of community reconstruction — the ability, the desire to participate and reach out to others — among people whose presence in Canada is synonymous, not only with the brutality of war but the fragility of survival.

THE PROBLEM IS THE TRADITION, THE LAW, AND ALSO THE SOCIAL LIFE ARE DIFFERENT. WE CAN'T COMPARE. I KNOW I WAS SUCCESSFUL IN HONG KONG, BUT I PAID THIRTY YEARS. AND THEN I GOT IT. BUT RIGHT NOW WHEN I MOVED HERE JUST A FEW YEARS, SO IT MEANS THAT I STAY HERE JUST A SHORT TIME. WHO KNOWS MY FUTURE? NOBODY.

Amy Sham

Amy Sham is from Hong Kong. Like a growing number of newcomers from that British colony, Amy was attracted to Canada as a business immigrant: her family produced substantial funds to invest in Canada as part of the bargain to secure permanent residence here. Three years ago, Amy arrived in Edmonton with her family, a move conceived both in fear and hope. As professionals in their country, she and her husband feared the treatment they might receive from the Chinese government when the British lease on that protectorate ends in 1997. The lessons of the Chinese Cultural Revolution still are fresh in their minds. They looked toward a hopeful future with their teenaged children in Canada.

In spite of her newfound status, Amy had never thought about business before coming to Canada. She was the child of Chinese-born parents, people of humble beginnings who had worked hard to make a good life for themselves and their children. For most of her life, Amy relied on the support provided by her family and on the good education she was lucky enough to receive to ensure her social and economic position.

No one encouraged me in school because actually my father never, never studied in school. When he was young, he was in mainland China and his father was rich. But the problem was the father loved the second son more than my father, so my father did not have a chance to study in school. He studied in a private learning centre for three years and learned some reading and writing, but not enough. He learned Chinese language by himself.

And then, maybe 20 or 25, my father moved to Hong Kong, and he told me he brought just $15. So it was very hard at the beginning. But he worked very hard and he started a business and got married with my mother. And then my mother helped in the business. After the Second World War, the economy in Hong Kong became better and better. And then they made money. So I had a very good

life in my childhood. Of course my parents loved the kids, but they did not care if we studied or not because my father think that he did not have a better education, but he made a lot of money.

My mother did not know anything. Just look after the house, and then look after us and help my father. But fortunately, I and my older brother could have a chance to study in a famous school. We didn't decide. Actually, it just depend on the luck. When I study in the elementary school, the principal was very good. And she knew which junior high school is good. She talked to my mother, arranged everything. At that time, it's not easy to get a position in a good junior high school because, at that time, not many junior high schools or high schools. All were private schools. Just a few junior highs belonged to the government.

I studied in True Light Middle School from Grade 7 up to Grade 13 because it is a good school and the kids came from a better background. They studied hard, and then I studied hard! They had good results in academic, and I tried to do the same way. So I was successful, too. And, then, after graduating in Grade 13, everyone tried to apply for university, so I just followed. Actually, I was really lucky!

I went home and I talked to my parents. They did not mind I study in university or not. My father is, I think, an open-minded person. But I know some relatives talked to my father: "You are stupid. You support your daughter to have a university study? You know, you lose a lot because she will marry. She will get married soon, and then you will lose your daughter. You lose your money. For the girl, no need to have a university education. Just high school is too much for them."

My father did not care. If I want to do, then he let me do it.

When I was at university, I lived at home. My parents let me decide everything but, of course, for my mother, she think that the most important is for me to get married and then have a husband. I remember the first year I was at university, one boy was interested in me and he wanted to make friends with me. But at that time, I said no. His parents liked me and my parents liked him and he came from a good background because he finished the education in Australia. He liked me and then my mother know, and then my mother talk to me and she hope that I can make friends with him. But I did not like this kind of arrangement, so I refused. I know that boy's purpose, so I reject him.

I think that, in the family, because I studied in high school and then the university, so the thinking between I and my parents is different. I am a modern Hong Kong person, the first generation born in Hong Kong. My parents had to grow up knowing what it was like in China, knowing about being poor, not having education.

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I think when I was young, I was very simple-minded. I did not plan anything. After graduating from the university, I never thought what kind of job I have to do. Many classmates applied for jobs to be a teacher, and then I just followed. So, at the beginning, I did not know whether I can be a teacher or not or if I like to be a teacher. But actually, at that time, to get a job in school was easier than to get a job in other fields. And also the salary is good. So it means that my life was influenced by others.

I didn't think about the future. I think maybe like this: I study in a good high school, they were from a good background. Maybe no one care about the future because, at that time, we did not need the money. I think just maybe a few plan about the future. After, it's just follow. Because it is a good school, so I remember in Grade 12 we had a united test in Hong Kong. My whole class got very good result. And then when we applied to study in the university, almost everyone got a chance. Some even went to the United States. Because all have a very good background.

I became a teacher. Many of my classmates applied for jobs to be a teacher, and then I just followed. I did not know whether I can be a teacher or not or I like to be a teacher or not. I don't know. But actually, at that time, to get a job in school was easier than to get a job in other fields. I taught in a middle school for five years. At the beginning I teach from Grade 7 to Grade 11.

The first year I was teaching school, I hate kids. I remember the first month and the second month were the worst. I did not know how to teach, how to instruct them. I almost quit because I did not know how to deal with the student. And also, I did not need the money. I talk to the principal I have to leave, I quit the job. And then the principal encourage me to try. He backed me up, and then, after one year I did not have trouble. And the relationship between I and the student are very good. And then I enjoyed teaching, and I improved, and then I got the working experience.

Then I bacame an administrator. To be an administrator in Hong Kong not an easy job — challenging and stressful. I was very busy. I remember when I came to school every day very early in the morning. And then I start to work hard, and I did not know what time I could leave every day. We always have a meeting. Sometimes a big meeting, sometimes a small meeting. And I deal with many people, just like students and parents, teachers and principals, and also school board and also other schools' administrators. I loved the kids. I loved my students and also they trust me in school because I work in the same school for more than twenty years. When they have trouble, they did not talk to their parents, but they talked to me. I felt very successful.

In school, I did everything, but I still thought about my two kids. I was actually very busy but I did not know why I can handle. Maybe now I couldn't. Every day, I woke up early. I prepare breakfast for them and then woke them up and got them to school and then I went to my working place and start working. When I had the time, I went to their school and I watched them at recess. Their school close to my working place, so sometimes ten or fifteen minutes, I walk fast to their school. I hoped that my kids would be good kids. And then I check whether they can get along with their classmate or not. They went home earlier than me. I had a nanny at home. I wrote down many things they have to do, but all academic work. And then, after I left school, I went home. After dinner, I try to instruct them and check their homework. I did not feel tired because I hoped that my kids could be successful. I hope that my job can be successful. So the only way: I have to work hard.

* * *

I started thinking about leaving Hong Kong ten years ago. I had a best friend who had moved to Los Angeles. She hoped that I can go there because she need me, because although she live in Los Angeles for twenty years, she did not have a friend like me. She feel lonely. And her whole family hope that I can move there. She always persuade me to move to the States. Then the immigration regulation changed and my best friend persuade me: try to apply before the regulation change. But at that time I did not want. I remember when the Prime Minister of England went to China, to Beijing. And then we got the news: in 1997, Hong Kong will be taken back by mainland China.

We decide to move because we studied history. I know China's history. Poland, or other communist countries, they had the same history at the beginning. They did not like educated people, and also the administrators: the

principals, the vice principals had a very hard time when they first took over. We started to apply to other countries. We applied to the United States, but a long line to wait, so after maybe eight years we still waiting.

At that time, my brother went back to Hong Kong — my younger brother. He was a lawyer in Edmonton, and then he moved to Hong Kong to be a lawyer in Hong Kong. He studied at the University of Alberta and he is successful. He hoped to help people to move to Canada and to make money. He urged me to try but, at that time, I did not like to move to Canada because I never been to Canada, so I just listened to him. He told me it doesn't matter for him because he help people to move. He just help me to fill in the application form. So, no need to worry. And then, he send my application form to Canada: immigrant. That was in 1987.

My brother does not think that it is hard to live in Canada, but I know if I move here, I would have a very hard time at the beginning. And I know, after ten years, everything can be settled down. The problem is we don't have choice to give up the moving. The political factors influenced us the decision making to move here. So, whether here is a good place or not, we have to move.

Before I came to Canada, I learned more skills at night school. Just like baking: I learned baking in Hong Kong. And also the barbecue method. I also learned the fast food, the Vietnamese food. Also, I learn how to cook the better Chinese food. Cooking was easy to learn.

Then I am thinking of quitting the job. It's hard. Because I know if I give the resignation letter, I couldn't get back. That's the end. And also the packing, packing the furniture. And selling the house, because at that time it's hard to sell house. Nobody want to buy because of the June 4th Movement [Chinese suppression of pro-democracy protesters]. Hong Kong was very unstable and the price of the building jumped down a lot. So very insecure at that time. Every day we just watch the TV, what happened in China. And also, we thought at that time we couldn't go back if we move here.

Before I moved to Canada, I went here [Edmonton] two times. And the second time we bought this house. So that when we move here, we live in this house because I don't want to stay in my mother's house. I attend one course in Hong Kong sponsored by the Canadian government. Just one hour. But I could only remember two things: don't forget to take the Family Allowance and remember to buy the Alberta Health Care. Oh, and also try to get the SIN [Social Insurance Number] card. That's all.

I think more help is good for the new immigrant. Especially the counselling. Because when Hong Kong people move here, usually they don't have money problems. But they have a problem in spirit. Just like us. We have a good job in Hong Kong. But when we move here, we can't get back that job in here. If I have a chance to get that back, I still can't do it well, I know, because of the language problem, the tradition.

And also, usually most of the people move here the age are the same as us: middle-aged. If not in the middle age, they don't have the money. They can't live here. But it's hard for a middle-aged person to change jobs. Because in Hong Kong, we look down the labour work. But when we move here we don't have other skill except we do the labour work. Otherwise, hard to get a better job.

They don't want to go back to school — that's a problem — because maybe they don't have the confidence. They think: "I'm too old. I can't study well." And also they think that: "Although I get the training, but how much will they pay me? They usually compare the income in Hong Kong and here.

* * *

The Canadian government asked me to start a business. Because we got the investment visa, we have to invest. And then we get the permanent resident status. Otherwise we can't. We have no other choice.

When we on the way we move here, just like on the aeroplane or in the taxi, the people always say that you are lucky, you can move now. But for us, we did not have that feeling. We did not feel lucky because we worried about the country. And, although we moved, we hoped that China would be good, and maybe one day we can go back.

When we moved here, after one month, then we start the business. And then we did not know how to run it. So we have to learn. So we learn very fast and work very hard every day. I involved in the community right away. I contact the waitress, and my husband contact the supplier. And also we contact the co-worker and the customers.

Maybe our experience different from other immigrants, very different. We were busy all the time, so we did not have homesick because too tired! You know, every day we went out at seven, and then we came home at eleven. Too tired! And then we worried all the time. Maybe short of the co-worker. Some staff would suddenly not show up. And also worry about every day's business. Maybe not a good business. Many things would happen. We did not know.

It was true. In spite of their best efforts, Amy and her husband's business failed. They arrived just as the Canadian economy moved into a severe decline. They had taken a long lease in a mall where many stores were finding it difficult to stay open. They had never run a restaurant before, let alone a restaurant in Canada. They had not sought local advice.

Amy does not regret her experience. In spite of her loss of a sizeable investment, she gained in other ways. To respect Amy's privacy, I will not write about here. The closing of that restaurant signalled a turn in Amy's life. She did not, at that time, know how much she craved such a change. Instead, while she was taking courses and making positive steps toward a different life, her secret kept her apart from others and nervous about her every action. It is only now, after some three years, that she is beginning to understand her own strengths, her own desires.

One day, I read the newspaper. I know there was a programme called Effective Career Development for New Immigrants. So we applied and then both of us attend that course up to finish. I learned the life skills, so I know the difference of living style in Canada and Hong Kong. I know the life of Canadians and I can compare and know which is good, Canadian or Hong Kong. And also I learned the computer and I learned English. And I got a working experience for three months.

And then I know if I want to work in the office, I should get more training. So I decide to study in Provincial College, and I finish a one year secretarial course, and then I try to find a job.

What kind of process did you have to go through to get into that programme? Did you just apply?

I applied. I went to Provincial College to apply first, and then I went to the Career Centre and apply the funding [Alberta Vocational Training Allowance]. And then the school need the transcript, and the principal of Provincial College help me to evaluation. And then I got the high school transcript.

They needed your high school transcript? But you had a university degree in Hong Kong!

Yeah, they need it. And the Career Centre told me I could get the funding. So Provincial College accept me to study over there.

What made you decide you wanted to work in an office?

Because I think that I can't carry heavy things. So it means that the labour work is not suitable for me. So I try to get a job in the office.

Was there any counselling available to you? Did anyone offer to help you look at a variety of careers?

Oh, in the programme they helped me, but the problem is I don't mind to do any job. It means that I can work in many fields. The problem is so it's not good for me. I can change jobs easily. Just like my friend, she only want to be an accounting clerk. That's all. Others, she does not want.

But the thing is that you can get into lots of things that pay very poorly and maybe aren't suitable for you, even though they aren't heavy work. So I think this is an area for planning. But I'm wondering what kind of help you got in terms of knowing how much money people made and what the opportunities were? How many different kinds of jobs there might be that you could think about?

I never think about that.

And nobody ever offered you help as part of your course?

No.

Even though it was called Effective Career Planning for Immigrants?

Yeah.

* * *

I finished the secretarial course in June, last year. I worked for one organization for three months. I did not have any trouble because no need to communicate outside. Inside the office, I did not have any trouble. Then I work to be a receptionist two days. Because of the language problem, I couldn't go on working there. Actually, the last job I make a wrong decision. I did not have problem in accounting field. Because no need to talk. Just like I work in Canada Place to be an accounts payable clerk. But if I want to be a receptionist, I have trouble because I don't know how to run the switchboard. And I do not know the name of the people working in the office. When the people call in, they speak in different accents and very fast. And also, I am new in the office, so I don't understand what's going on.

Did you have a sense of that, when you were in the training course? That language might be a problem?

No, I did not think that before.

Did you have opportunities to get that kind of work experience, to handle telephone and that sort of thing as part of your training?

No.

OK, so that wasn't included. Didn't you anticipate that it might be a problem?

Yeah. So I think that I have to improve my speaking and listening. Three days ago, I read the newspaper. I know that they have some courses in the evening. So maybe in January I study conversation in one school.

Make sure you take an advanced course!

I don't know, but I think maybe I learn in the basic way.

So it sounds like, since you've been going to school, you've had a lot of things to think about and a lot of things to learn. It doesn't sound like you're finished. It sounds like you're still making changes.

Actually, just starting.

Could you talk about the kinds of changes you're thinking about?

Actually, I'm quite sure I'm not a good planner because if I make a good plan first, then I know when I get a job what will happen. Just like I think that it's good for me to work in the office because I don't like the labour work. And I want to tell people I have a better career. But I don't mind the wage is pretty low. But I don't think that the office work not the same as in school because in the office I work with computer. I deal with the figures. Actually, it is a very boring work because, before, I deal with people. Everything is changing and moving. So it means that working in the office—suddenly I changed the mind because of the language. Because I believe I can conquer later, I can learn it better. But the problem is I want to do something, deal with people. And I like to have feedback.

Did you get information about agencies that could help you with career planning or resources in Edmonton when you first arrived?

No, I don't know.

I know you did talk to someone at Catholic Social Services. I'm wondering how you met her.

I work in a nursing home to be a dietary aide and I know Carol. And then some co-worker told me that she also work in the Catholic Social Services. She work in the nursing home on Saturday or Sunday. At that time, I was in a bad mood and I need some counselling, so I talk to Carol.

Is that a part-time job?

Yeah, it's part-time. If suddenly they short of people and I am off, then they call me to go back again. It's hard to get a full-time job in the hospital as a dietary aide because many people are waiting to be a full-time worker. I don't want to fight for that because I know I have many potential. And also I think I don't want to wash, to clean the dish the whole life. I know my potential. If I can do other job, I can do something nice for society.

What are you thinking about in your planning?

In January, I am thinking I shall study in college to take the Residential Aide course, and then after the course I know whether I like that job or not. If I don't like the job, maybe I go back to the office. When I work in the office, I think that is the first step in my career. And then, when I have my own time, I try to learn more, and then to change other job.

So you think you will study part-time when you are working to move into something else? Do you have anything in mind?

I don't know yet, but the problem right now is the English. So, in January, in the daytime, I study in college, but at night I shall study conversation. And also maybe I attend the TOEFL course. And then I try to get better marks in TOEFL. Then I think I go back to university. I know, at my age, maybe I'm pretty late but better than do nothing.

* * *

Our conversations often meandered around Amy's situation in Canada as one of an increasing number of business immigrants from Hong Kong. Their place is, in many ways, unlike that of other immigrants. Unlike refugees, they do not receive orientation to settlement agencies and government services for newcomers. Unlike independent immigrants, they do not have pressure to get into employment and support themselves. In many ways, the very things that have qualified them to come to Canada — money and education — may serve to insulate them from Canadian society.

It's hard for them because they don't feel like they belong here. They can't speak good English, and then when they contact the foreigners [Canadians], they feel frightened. So, up to now, if the people do not get the job, they usually only contact Hong Kong people. And they like to go to dim sum. After dim sum, then they go shopping and then they come home and prepare supper. Maybe they play mah jongg. After three or four months, then they go back to Hong Kong, and then come back here. They just wait for citizenship. That's the life.

It seems to be a waste of talent because a lot of these people, I think, have much to offer in terms of skills and things they've done with their lives and ideas they have. That seems to be lost.

But the problem is we can't change them because they don't want to change. Last week, my older son told me right now he think that he is Canadian. He is involved in the society. But for most of the Hong Kong people, they do not involved. They have money. So they should work hard. They don't mind any job. Then they have a better starting than us.

That doesn't mean they don't have problems.

Oh, they have a lot of problems. You know why? Just like the house — the husband and wife stay in the same house every moment except sleeping. So they quarrel. But they close their eyes! I think there is a lot of fighting at home. And also, the husband feels very unhappy because he can't get a better job here, and so he feels insecure. And the wife do not think about this because usually the husband support the wife. And because of this, the husband is bad-tempered and the wife can't understand his situation.

Some people complain that they came here to do business, and they tried to set up business the same way they did in Hong Kong, and they lost their business because they said they had to pay too much to workers and they just couldn't do business the same way they did in Hong Kong. So they lost everything.

I think Hong Kong business people usually hope that they make money. They make a lot of money in a very short time. But that's hard here because a different background. Hong Kong is actually a big risk to the business people. And I believe that in an unstable society, easy to make money. But in a stable place, it's hard.

What do you imagine will happen to those people, maybe in ten or fifteen years?

I don't know. I think that, in their mind, they always think: "If I get the citizenship I go back to Hong Kong to make money." But I know some people, when they get the citizenship, they did not go back. They just go on their life like this in Canada.

What do you think that does for Canada — to have people living like that? Do you think that is a good thing?

Of course not. I think that it's unfair to Canada. But the problem is on them. Because Canada give chance to the people move here. They hope that those people can be helpful to Canada. But right now they did nothing to Canada.

But do you think that Canada is doing enough to help those people become successful and to become participating?

For me, Canada actually did a lot. The problem is the people did not know how to get it. Just like me — I get many benefits from Canadian government. Just like the Effective Career Development. They gave me a course. The government spend a lot for us. They gave me the course. They gave me the work experience. Good for us. And when I study in Provincial College, the government gave me the funding.

Do you think there could be any strategies to help those people, to get them to come out more, or do you think it's not useful to think about that?

The problem is sometimes I want to give you nice things. You have to accept. Just like me. The Canada government give me the nice things. I accept. I take it. I don't feel embarrassed. But some people do not think that. They don't think that they need help. But actually, they need help.

Maybe a way is for them to get a start, maybe just to meet some other people. Maybe just to get some orientation about what's going on in Edmonton. I think many of those people don't even know what's going on here.

They don't know. But I don't know why they can live. I don't like to live without purpose. You know, we have energy. The only thing we don't have education here. But we got working experience.

What about having a programme especially for people in the Business Class? To bring people together? Maybe offer it in Chinese? To do some orientation and that kind of thing. Do you think people would be open to that?

I think so. Maybe try some orientation and some activities. And try to find out the people who are immigrants, who are successful here. And let them talk their own story here. The problem is they can't have the patience to do the first step.

So they need someone to help with that?

Yeah. It's hard, I know. The first step is very hard, but if we move to a new place, we like a newborn baby. A newborn baby is easy to adapt because they know nothing. But we have our own life. So we move here, we have to change. Maybe some people refuse. Even right now my husband always think back home is good. But I know when he go back to Hong Kong, we won't like it.

So strategies to get people out really mean that you have to go out to where those people are and bring them out?

It's helpful. Because right now, most of the Hong Kong people move here, they always think that it's hard to get job, hard to make money. It's not a good place to live. If I own a business, I will lose money. Very negative thinking. But for me, I think that if Canada is so terrible a place to live, why still people here? They should move out. If the business — every business — will lose money, why people still run the business? I know many people making money. I know that some people make a lot. Of course, they won't make money like in Hong Kong, but a lot.

But can we find a way to get Canada together with those people in their minds?

I think that the Hong Kong people, they should adapt easily than other people because most of them got money here. No need to worry about the financial. And also, they can speak English. They can read English. If they want to go back to school, easy job. I told many people, I discover some people move here they work as a dishwasher. That kind of job is very low pay, but they can support their family because they work very hard or they work two jobs in one day. And their kids graduate from the university, too. So how can we say we can't live in Canada? We can't get a job? We can get a job in Canada easily if we don't mind what kind of job. But if we want a job we like, so we have to pay. We have to

pay everything and then we get results. Of course, we want to invest. So it means that Hong Kong people want to invest the spirit, and then we get a better job. Most of the people refuse to go back to school because they know they have to study hard in school. They do not want that.

* * *

Amy Sham sits opposite me, smiling. Today is the first day that I have heard in her voice a growing confidence, heard of her aspiration to break with the conventions that have governed her life and to have the opportunity to be a 'bad girl' if she chooses. She desires to play. Perhaps she will have a chance to play in Canada. She is optimistic about her future, relating her children's experiences at school here to the possibilities for a more relaxed, more varied lifestyle than was possible in Hong Kong. At the same time, I know how she still struggles to find a place for herself, hoping to frame the experience of her life in a new, but meaningful way.

Amy is philosophic about her experience as a business immigrant. She agreed to start a business in Canada and she did that. Her business failed, but it did not defeat her. She was able to reach out for assistance from schools and social agencies in her community. She found strength in the lives of her children. She also knows, however, that she is, in some ways, exceptional as a business immigrant. In five years or so, she will be working and sharing with Canadians, doing something she wants to do. The money that secured her Canadian visa has not shaped her plan here, nor has it diminished her need to experience a circle of care.

Chapter 6 – In Conversation with the Storyteller, the Statistician and the Teacher

On a grey, wintry morning, the storyteller and the statistician came to meet at my house. I greeted each of them, took their coats and led them to my table where a pot of tea awaited us. I knew this combination did not augur well for a comfortable meeting and that it would take all of my energy to attempt to mediate their differences. It was my will alone which had brought them together today and, in spite of my worst fears, I was confident that they could talk together and that something good might come of it. Still, each of them must have been as curious as I to meet one other or they would never have agreed to come In spite of their initial postures of polite disengagement, I caught brief moments of curiosity and wonder as they encountered each other. Now was the time to offer the tea, I thought.

After the first feelings of distrust and before my role as host began to erode. Having spent so much time with each of them in such an intimate way before, I felt confident that our time together inhered the possibility of new insights into this problem with we had each struggled in isolation.

"Have you two met before?" I thought that would break the ice gently.

"Well, I have read some of Storyteller's work before," stammered Statistician, "but I can't say that we've ever actually spoken."

"And I have often been in the room when Statistician has been presenting her work," offered storyteller, "but since we travel in such different circles, we have never really been introduced before. I'm very curious how you, Laura Ho, had the nerve to bring us together like this."

I began to explain my research once more, this time to eager ears. Since we all came to this discussion of immigrants in adult education with our own backgrounds, we became quickly immersed by the topic. I recounted how I had become involved with this issue through personal experience as a traveller and a teacher, how I had become interested in research through awareness of the kinds of programmes made available and not made available to newcomers.

Storyteller wanted to know about how I had come to work with immigrants, so I told her about my early life with a father in the armed forces, moving, settling, moving again, never having friends the way that other children did. I told her about my attraction to work with immigrants during my studies in Vancouver, about the people I met there, and about my work in Edmonton. She smiled with satisfaction.

"But surely you were also affected by the information about immigration and economic development that you got through the media at that time! I know that numbers sometimes aren't as glamorous as these personal anecdotes, but don't try to pretend you don't use them yourself." It was Statistician. She seemed amused by my introduction, and obviously ready for a challenge.

"It's true," I began. "The fact that there were statistics showing steady immigration during the 1970s and indications of refugee movements to come definitely was a factor in my decision-making. I cannot deny that. There were also projections, at that time, of teaching opportunities for university graduates that did not inspire much optimism. But I cannot say that those statistics were the only thing informing my decisions. I think my own experience with challenge and change explains a lot about who I am and why I do the work that I do."

Statistician took a long drink of tea. "So that has convinced you that yours is a more valid way of approaching this topic than any other?"

"I'm not sure that you quite understand my intentions in inviting you here today," I countered. "You know that my study includes both narrative and statistical elements. It took much consideration to conceive of such a design. Obviously, both of your approaches can say different things about the issue, but here's the problem. Much of the information that is currently available about immigrants and immigration is drawn only from statistics. I feel that this information is of some value in understanding the issues but that statistics cannot illuminate the situation of individual immigrants. The stories of individuals offer other kinds of insights about immigrant adaptation than you can draw from a statistical view. How can I justify a narrative view with a statistical view of the same phenomenon?

I have taken a chance with this idea of mine: it may be that these views are pretty much mutually exclusive, that even though they each relate to the same subject, they can never speak to each other. I'm not so sure.

I've taken the chance that by bringing both of your views into association, there will be an amplification of elements which may, if addressed by only a single methodology, appear as insignificant or as disconnected from the whole."

By this time, Storyteller appeared a little upset. "Stories are one of the most original ways of sharing information among humans. It is only since the Modern Age, particularly since the beginning of this century, that a statistical view of things has gained any prominence at all. Look at a problem like societal accommodation of immigrants. How has statistical knowledge contributed to an understanding which encourages concrete change within our communities?"

"Well, I suppose I would take a step back and ask you how you would propose to talk about change without first ascertaining the facts about the situation? That identification, that unemotional description of observable events is what we are about. It is very difficult, even dangerous, to plan a response to any situation based solely on the strength of human emotion. There are many practical questions, too, which are probably inappropriate subjects for your stories but perfect for statistical description. Sometimes you just need to know the numbers. How many unemployed teachers are there in Alberta or what is the relative proportion of people in rural areas as compared with cities?"

"That may be true but you seem to assume that such information is value-free, that the production of numbers, and technology generally, is not tied up with fundamental values in our society. What does it do to the reader to learn how many teachers are unemployed in Alberta? The number itself masks those teachers' experience with unemployment, renders invisible the difficulties of their families."

"But what are you going to do with those feelings? Where can you go with them?" Statistician had obviously heard this all before. "In order to address a problem, you have to have a system. When you can conceptualize of society as a unified system, you can do as Talcott Parsons pointed out, and employ the same kind of theoretical analysis of problems that is used in systems in other sciences. In this way we can use established conventions to study a whole range of subjects which otherwise would remain mutually unintelligible. Policy makers cannot be educators and psychologists and language experts and anthropologists. Some kind of system is necessary for communication of shared ideas about the social whole."

It was time to intervene again. "I think we all have read enough of the research literature to be familiar with the major challenges posed to normative science by physical scientists such as Thomas Kuhn, and by philosophers such as Jean-Francois Lyotard. The kinds of issues that are now apparent in our world cannot be addressed by strategies of simplification. Simplistic strategies have only resulted in the creation of larger problems, like the pollution caused by developments based on the combustion of cheap fossil fuels and large scale poverty caused by economic strategies to maximize profits for a few at the expense of many."

"So you think that demographic analysis such as you have just undertaken only simplifies the problem you claim to be trying to elucidate? How else would you propose to describe the client population of the counselling service? Do you propose your stories as an alternative?" Statistician was almost spluttering by the end of this third question. I knew this interaction would be difficult before we started, but I also knew how important it was to keep going, counting on our commitment to this shared area of work to keep us talking.

Storyteller seemed detached from our discussion, lost somewhere in her own thoughts. "I was just thinking about Azar Bahman," she purred. "What do you think that the descriptive method of statistics can tell us about her life? I think that is the question that Laura is getting at. It's not that we need to value a particular method as bad or good compared with any other, just that each is limited by its world view, each incomplete. I am willing to acknowledge that an individual story cannot represent the experience of all immigrants. At the same time, however, I hope that you can admit to the limitations of your method. Surely, then, there is much that we can talk about together."

"Certainly." Statistician's voice had grown calmer. "I think that you have just identified one of the big differences between us, Storyteller. Your focus is almost exclusively on the experience of individuals, while I am more concerned with collective experience, the descriptive features of the members of a particular group. Actually, I, too, am a storyteller, but of a different sort. My stories are flatter than yours since they do not include personal details, but they are also broader than yours in some ways, focussing on selected characteristics of individuals across an entire group. In the case of the LVA study, I could provide some description of the client population over time: the database extended over several years. In that sense, the historical, I believe, we may have something in common."

"There is a very powerful element which you both share in all of this, and that is your orientation toward the immigrant clients of this study. Your divergent views are a consequence of your training and your belief systems about what it is that you are doing."

"It's much more than that, Laura," interjected Storyteller. "Earlier, Statistician talked about the need for detachment in research, to present unemotional information about the situation studied. She did not, however, talk about the effect of that stance upon the researcher or the reader of the research. Mary Belenky (1986) observes that, carried too far, disinterest "degenerates into an absence of interest, anomie, and monotony." (p.110) She is really talking about creating distance as an intended outcome of objective methods. Who can access the information that is produced and how is it used?

Let me ask you. Who receives the statistical information about the LVA?"

"It is reported directly to the funders, the provincial government," I replied.

"So, it is a kind of information which interests bureaucrats," continued Storyteller. "And how do they use it?"

I thought back to my recent interview with a bureaucrat who formerly had responsibility for the programme, and pulled out my notes. "Well, here's what an official from Career Development says about the information:

> 'It enabled me to do a lot of different things. I would massage the data and summarize it each year and send it to the powers that be for negotiating with the feds. on the training agreement for full time seats, to access our own dollars or any spare federal dollars that came along for ESL. It was a lever. I got stats out of there, and I could do that.' (personal communication, N. Kinsella, Feb.17/93)

The bureaucrat's words were a tonic for Storyteller. "So this fellow indicated that, for him, the information provided by LVA was a tool, a device that enabled him to get money for ESL programmes. Did he say anything at all about the people represented by the statistics?"

"Let me see. He does talk about needs identification. Here's what he says:

> Now, the problem with needs identification is that after you've identified the needs, then of course, it appears on a bureaucrat's desk. And that means me. Then it becomes my responsibility and what am I going to do about it? (personal communication, N. Kinsella, Feb. 17, 93)

"This last statement brings to mind another observation that the bureaucrat made earlier comparing the situation in adult ESL to a restaurant with a lot of cooks, but no menu. There really isn't any overall plan to provide immigrants with the range of options they seek. There are lots of programmes, but each runs fairly independently of the others. Once funding is received from either the federal or provincial government, ESL programmers have quite a lot of latitude as to what kind of programme they will offer. Government officials, until very recently, have not had much power, nor the inclination to intervene in curricular matters. So, the bureaucrat was expressing frustration at not being able to do anything, even if he could readily identify the problem."

Statistician nodded in agreement. "You see, Storyteller, it is important not to mistake the messenger for the villain. Certainly statistics is a tool used almost universally by bureaucracies to describe problems, to document change and to report on quantifiables such as finance, population and economic trends. That does not make such reporting responsible for the outcomes of the decision makers that use them. The bureaucrat you talked to was glad to receive the LVA statistics because they provided description of the situation of adult immigrant learners in Edmonton. The information itself was helpful. But how far was the information disseminated and how was it used? These are questions of application, not of design."

"You are suggesting, then, that statistical research is in no way implicated in the larger problem of its application?" Storyteller looked directly at Statistician this time, challenging her. "Consider how your methods differ from mine in their treatment of community. To be able to engage in statistical research, as you do,

requires a large amount of technical knowledge: ordinary people are excluded from the research process and its consequent interpretation via government policy and financial decisions.

"In my work with stories, however, I begin with individual experience. A story is told and I endeavour to record it. Once recorded, it can be shared with others. You know, in the very process of sharing, something else begins to happen. When someone reads the story of another, they begin to think about their own experience and to enter into a dialogue with the story. This was made particularly clear to me when I reviewed the four stories of this dissertation with the counsellors in the LVA Programme. I approached that meeting with no idea of how those people who are mostly immigrants themselves, would react. As they began to speak, however, they spoke passionately, not only about the stories they had read, but about their own experiences as immigrants, learners, counsellors. One woman said:

> I felt like I was with the person. It made me think of my own clients. By reading this, it was an extra reminder of the importance of working with people.' (personal communication, LVA Counsellors, Feb. 11, 1993).

She went on to share her realization that:

> Azar was able to fit into systems in Denmark and Germany, even though her skills in their languages was minimal. When she came here [Canada], she was regarded as a blank slate. The same with Dave. He brought skill, information and knowledge, but had to fit them within the parameters of our system to use them.' (personal communication, LVA Counsellors, Feb. 11, 1993).

This is a kind of understanding which is unattainable by statistical method. How can any amount of measuring and describing provide the insight offered by that counsellor after she read the stories of Azar and Dave? How could...."

It was all beginning to fade into noise. My intention in bringing these two together had been to allow for the strength lying beneath and between their positions to gain exposure. There were things to be said, insights to be revealed; but here amidst the dirty tea mugs and cookie plates which occupy the everyday, I felt that my own position was slipping away, my role becoming irrelevant, cast in shadow by the much more powerful voices of Statistician and Storyteller.

What about my own position? As the person initiating this encounter, didn't I have some obligation to articulate to my colleagues what that was? Had I even taken the time to articulate it for myself? It seemed that I had really set myself up for failure by considering only the two classic positions of theory: Statistician's and Storyteller's. Meanwhile, my intention all along had been to bring to light and give

expression to the ambiguity of the space between, the space which I now recognized as my own: that of the teacher.

"I'd like to say something," I heard my own voice say. Both my guests now turned to listen. "I'd like to share with you some of my experience as a teacher and counsellor. Perhaps it will help you to understand why I think it is necessary to include both of your viewpoints in this work."

Relief. The tension in the room began to diminish. Statistician asked for more tea, and I filled all our cups.

"You see, although you probably haven't realized it, during my entire career as a teacher, I have been walking between you. My work has related to the information produced by demographers and sociologists, as you have pointed out, Statistician. Your reports about immigrants and immigration have affected many aspects of my work, from changing funding levels for English language programmes, to public awareness of the numbers of newcomers in our community, even to whether my job would continue or not. Your work is followed by politicians, bureaucrats, media types, academics. All of these people have something to say about classroom life, curriculum, expectations of learners.

The position of the ESL teacher or immigrant counsellor can be challenging for many reasons. Any teaching involves mediation, but when you work with immigrant students, you are also called upon to advocate with government offices and prospective employers on those people's behalf. At the same time, you try to keep up to date with a never-ending stream of legislative and administrative change relating to the existence of the programme. Since responsibility for immigration is federal and education provincial, both levels of government are continuously negotiating as to their respective responsibilities for the education of adult immigrants. But these discussions always end with dollars and never touch upon what happens to learners in school. Curriculum is a matter left by Alberta Advanced Education to the discretion of individual schools.

"What do you say to Azar Bahman when she comes to you and complains that she has spent five months in a full-time English programme and learned nothing? It's not that government hasn't accepted its responsibility and made sure that funds are available for the education of immigrants. In addition to paying for her classes, Azar was paid a living allowance while she attended school. Somehow, in spite of her and her classmates' protestations to authorities, nothing was done. An opportunity intended to support learning was totally wasted. This failure is directly related to the fact that, in spite of providing funding programmes, neither the provincial nor the federal government will accept responsibility to coordinate

ESL education and to ensure that programmes offered address the needs and goals of immigrant learners."

"Laura, I understand your commitment and your concern to these people." Statistician reached for a cookie. "But again I must state that your concern seems to be not with the figures and reports we produce, but in their application. Isn't that true?"

"Let me show you a couple of federal reports written from a statistical base so that I can show you what I mean. Here's a report called *Immigrants Unable to Speak English or French: A Graphic Overview*, produced by Multiculturalism and Citizenship Canada. You can see by looking through it that all demographic aspects of the problem have been documented: breakdown by gender, by age, by region, by portion of the population, by mother tongue, by year of arrival, and so on. It's very detailed. But what is the purpose of such a document? The authors state that:

> Studying the population unable to speak an official language is important to the development of appropriate government policies and programs related to language. Language training programs, for example, can be better formulated if the demographic and socio-economic characteristics are known. (Pendakur & Ledoux, 1990, p.3)

"I can agree that it is useful to consider the characteristics of our population relative to the services we provide. At the same time, however, this very goal is based on the belief that it is only a lack of English which disables immigrants in employment and society generally. There is no substantiation of this belief, however. Look, here it is again, in a report from the Canada Employment and Immigration Advisory Council (1991, p.1):

> It is difficult to overestimate the importance of language training to immigrants. The major obstacle preventing immigrants from practising much-in-demand skills acquired in their country of origin is a lack of language proficiency. Successful immigrant adjustment into the host country depends on their ability to communicate in the official language(s).

It is only when such broad and commonly held generalizations are questioned and when we take into consideration what really happens to people — their lived experience — that we begin to realize that language is not the only barrier, and may not, by itself, be the most significant barrier to immigrants in Canadian society. The practice of systematically producing decontextualized descriptions of immigrants can itself be interpreted as a device to separate and problematize the situation of this identifiable group. Identifying a group by what they cannot do, as in the title of the report, *Immigrants Unable to Speak English or French (1990)*, represents a

particular point of view about needs of that group. Other people might wish to ask, however, about the variables which haven't been measured here, and about what a group like immigrants unable to speak English or French do know.

"Each of the people who told their stories for my study spoke about education and employment. For Azar Bahman it was the need to connect skill training with employment; for Jan it was the need to compete with Canadians in employment; for Dave it was the need to develop skills which would provide him a reasonable living so that he could help his family; for Amy Sham it was the problem of career change. Education and employment are not only concerns for immigrants, they are mainstream societal concerns which have implications for language training for immigrants. Such broad issues cannot be adequately addressed for this group, however, by focussing almost exclusively on their language training needs. Let me ask a question from my position as a teacher working with immigrants. What is the ability of our educational institutions — our colleges, universities and technical schools — to respond to the particular needs of immigrants?"

I looked across the table, suddenly conscious of how much and how long I had been speaking. It was as though I had just returned from another place. The place from which I had spoken was quiet and strong, not characterized at all by the intimidation I had often felt as a teacher and researcher. Yet it was a place that I knew well. I did not have to be the referee there. But what about here in this room? Both my co-researchers were quietly studying me, pondering my presentation. Statistician was fingering the report I had put on the table, studying its figures for insights beyond the predictable. Storyteller's eyes searched mine.

Then Statistician leaned over to her briefcase and pulled out a thick, red file, the LVA file. "I understand what you are trying to get at, Laura. You take issue with the removed stance you perceive to be taken by statisticians. You question the motive for distance and objectivity."

"I suppose I do," I heard myself say.

"Well, then, I wonder what you thought about the statistics obtained from the LVA counselling programme. Here, we have quite a different situation for collecting information than is typically encountered in information from either the federal or provincial government. In a sense there has been a process of self selection on the part of the clients of that service. It's not superficial information about the whole group of anonymous immigrants. Instead, we can tell, by comparing these results with those general ones who is taking advantage of language and vocational counselling. For instance, here in looking at Immigration Categories, we can see that fully half of the clientele was made up of refugees. Compare this with information from Alberta Career Development and Employment

for 1990 which shows refugees making up only about 23% of immigration to Alberta. Now there may be a couple of reasons why this is self selection takes place. It may be that refugees receive a better orientation to community services than other immigration classes, and so take more advantage of them. Or it may be that other immigrants have better networks for support than refugees and so don't require counselling to the degree that refugees do.

"As well, in the LVA data, we have information about the employment status of participants. This is information not available from immigration sources, since that information is collected before newcomers enter the workforce. Again it appears that self selection for counselling is evident. Fully 65% of registrants report that they are unemployed, compared with between nine and thirteen per cent of the general population over the same time period, from 1987 to 1992."

And now Storyteller became involved in the discussion. "It is true that the LVA database provides some interesting description about the shape of the client population. I was quite astounded at the connections I was able to make between the figures you produced, Statistician, and elements of the stories that I heard. For example, you talked about the process of self selection in coming to counselling, and it reminded me of Dave's comments about the foreignness of the concept of counselling among Vietnamese people. That makes me wonder how many others in the community simply are not coming forward for help because they, too, don't understand the purpose and the need for such service. In their own countries, as Dave says, many people have support networks through family and religion. Seeking help from strangers is probably a more familiar concept to refugees who have encountered workers in camps, government offices and settlement agencies. The process of becoming a refugee can itself be educative if it orients newcomers toward bureaucratic support to compensate for missing family systems.

"But I was most surprised by some of your findings, Statistician. For example, you showed that the overwheming majority of clients of LVA had been in Canada less than five years. At the same time, that same figure showed a demand for counselling and educational advice among people who have been in this country for up to twenty years! There is nothing in any of my stories that touches upon such an observation."

"You are quite right, Storyteller," I interrupted. "It is interesting to think about who those people might be that come for counselling after so much time in Canada. I would suggest, from my experience working in LVA, that that group of people includes a large number of seniors — people who have come to Canada to join their children or who have retired and now have time to learn English — and a group of people who went to work directly after immigrating and who are now

hoping to improve their educations and move into better-paying employment. But since the overall clientele of the service has been largely made up of refugees, I would also say that these two groups — the retired and longtime residents — are probably underrepresented in counselling compared with their incidence in the general population."

"You don't think that most of those people's needs are being met by mainstream education and social programmes, Laura?" Statistician seemed concerned.

"I would say that some of those people are being served in other ways. They may just adapt to living here without much English, depending heavily on their own cultural communities for support. That doesn't just mean seniors, either. There are many people — cooks and restaurant workers, retail workers, tradespeople, small business owners — who have adapted in this way. Many others, of course, have learned some English, but some of those may return to learning after retirement. All in all, though, I still feel this group is underrepresented in counselling programmes like LVA."

"But how would you be able to identify those people statistically?" wondered Statistician aloud.

"Probably, you couldn't," I offered. "That's part of the problem in considering the educational needs of immigrants, as a group. When does an immigrant cease to be an immigrant? Perhaps a question like that is itself instructive of difficulties we have thinking about immigrants as part of the general population. Categories such as gender, ethnicity, age groupings and so on are convenient to work with because they describe relative fixities. The language learning process, however, does not lend itself well to categorization. Of course, we can classify numbers of people who use a particular language, but what about the character of their participation in using that language? If command of official languages is such a concern for our country, what can we say about people in the process of learning?"

"Well, we can say some things," countered Statistician. "The LVA study included examination of both mother tongue and English proficiency. We were able to show that the largest portion of the clientele had some basic (simple sentences, limited vocabulary, limited comprehension) or intermediate level (improving comprehension, slightly better vocabulary and sentence structure) English, but that proficiency varied by group. Vietnamese, Spanish and Cantonese groups had the largest numbers of clients with basic English, while the Polish, Persian and Arab groups had larger numbers of clients classified as intermediate."

"So we can say that, among people presenting themselves, at the time of their assessment the vast majority had fairly low levels of English," Storyteller

concluded. "Learning English seems to be one of the greatest motivations for newcomers to register with LVA. But, as I asked before, how does that need to learn English relate within the context of people's lives? That question is very important to this study."

"I think we can observe some things about that context, Storyteller. We can compare, for instance, levels of English proficiency with literacy in mother tongue. When you look at literacy in mother tongue, the figure appears as almost a reverse of of that for English proficiency. That means that, among the LVA clientele, although some clients have limited literacy in their mother tongue, a large number have fair to excellent proficiency, correlating with an average of 10.6 years of education among men and about 10.1 years among women."

"As you were speaking, Statistician, I was thinking back to the people that I spoke with, and to Amy Sham in particular." Storyteller rubbed her fingers over the tattered cover of a home-made book. "I was thinking about her accomplishments in Hong Kong and how literacy had shaped her life there. The call of literacy brought her to higher education in spite of her parents' inexperience with formal schooling. She anticipated a good life using and sharing the skills which she had learned in school. When she came to Canada, she had quite well-developed English skills already, but those language skills alone were not enough to ensure her success here. She is still struggling to find a place in the community, still looking for the training which will allow her a good job. I am very interested in examining the much talked about relationship between learning English and success in adaptation. I think that the stories I have retold offer questions about the assumptions supporting such claims. You have seen that all of the people that I talked with spoke about the importance of learning English to their own advancement. It is my feeling, however, that the stories of their experience in Canada have other lessons, and that English is not always the answer."

I began to think back to some of my own students' experiences. What was it that they smiled about? What helped them to find success in their lives here? Was it just English or was there more? I remember some who struggled to upgrade their English, then to upgrade their basic education so that they could qualify for postsecondary education. But was it their experience as educated people in their own countries or their desire to integrate into Canadian society that motivated them? It seemed to me that it was really their life experience and their ability to create a way to reveal their talents that kept them going.

That didn't mean that those with the most education or experience always fared better than others, however. I think of a Vietnamese medical student who I once worked with, and of his journey to become a pipefitter in Canada, and I think

that that man has been highly successful. I think of others who have invested in higher education in this country and who have been unable to find employment related to their studies, though, and I have to wonder why. What makes the difference? I had to agree with Storyteller. It couldn't just be English...

"Where have you been?" Statistician chuckled. "We were just getting into an important part of the discussion when you checked out for a few minutes. Would you care to share your thoughts with us? I for one would like to know what you think about this topic. After all, you are the teacher! You work in the middle of this problem."

"I was thinking about what you said, Statistician, about education, and its relationship with knowledge of English and about what you said, Storyteller, about your questioning of English proficiency as the indicator of success among immigrants. I was thinking back to some of my own students and clients and about their experiences here: which ones have felt most successful and what did that relate to? It seems to me that English is not the only indicator we should look at. I mean, I know one person who came here fifteen years ago and worked in small business without ever studying English. Today, he is a very successful businessman and he still doesn't know that much English.

"On the other hand, I know another man who improved his English and earned a degree in Computer Science here, and he has had great difficulty in adapting to employment. It's been a very frustrating experience for him. He has worked as a restaurant manager, but he doesn't want to go back to that now that he has invested so much in his education. I try to think about what makes them so different. English is part of it, but, in this instance, the situation is the reverse of what the government reports and some of the academic literature would suggest to us. The man with less English has been able to find more success than the man who went to school and trained for a job."

"So, you are agreeing with me, then, Laura?" Storyteller positively gloated as she turned toward Statistician.

"No, Storyteller, although I very much admire what each of you has done, I don't think that you can say that I would adopt either of your positions totally. I am more in agreement with Jerome Bruner in his 1985 presentation of narrative and paradigmatic modes of thought as complementary yet 'irreducible to one another.'(p.97) Each way of knowing is concerned with interpretation, but 'the one seeks explications that are context free and universal, and the other seeks explications that are context sensitive and particular.' Bruner goes on to show that, although there is validity in the exercise of each mode, in the end "there is no direct

way in which a statement derived from one mode can contradict or even corroborate a statement derived from the other.'"

"So Bruner is saying that although we each interpret from the same world, our views will always be mutually exclusive?" Storyteller asked.

"In and of themselves," I continued. "Since the world includes both aspects, however, both modes of thought are necessary. We may begin with one mode of thought, and resort to the other. In a discussion of Dave's story, for instance, we may come to question how many students like Dave are in our post secondary programmes and what they are doing there. In this way, we can go back and forth between the narrative and paradigmatic."

"Could we amplify that view a little by considering what Jurgen Habermas has observed about the possibility of communication?" countered Storyteller.

"Of course," I replied.

"Habermas (1987)characterizes the texture of the lifeworld in terms of possibilities for communicative interaction and suggests that the such events are 'formed by situation definitions that, as measured against the actual need for mutual understanding, have to overlap to a sufficient extent.'(vol. 2, p.121) By this, he means that unless we have some common interest in understanding each other, we will have no reason to interact."

"I see," began Statistician meditatively. "And do you think, even after our discussions today, that we have that common interest?"

That question was followed by an uncomfortable period of silence meant to challenge all of us. Was there enough in common among us to allow further conversation or were we forever destined to study to our own respective worlds, sniping at the others with academic critiques and little else?

At that moment I experienced the weight of responsibility I had accepted when I chose to be a teacher, a pragmatist, the one in the middle. For it was me who lived, more than either of the others, with the consequences of their deliberations, with the stories and the statistics inscribing the context of education. I thought hurriedly to my own experience, to the critiques of dualism, to the increasing number of writers adopting a stance of inquiry.

"What is this common interest and who determines it?" I asked. "Will it be the same tomorrow as it is today? Are we judging it according to some set of rules we both share or is that, too, a consensual problem? I must agree with Lyotard (1984) that the goal of such permanent consensus is itself monolithic, unhelpful in addressing issues in the world. He calls for the 'renunciation of terror' (p.66) and urges us, instead, to look at examples already in society of temporary contracts

replacing outmoded institutions 'in the professional, emotional, sexual, cultural, family, and international domains, as well as political affairs.'"

"You mean like a marriage contract or an employment contract?" Storyteller was incredulous at my suggestion.

"Yes, that's right. There are reasons that those innovations took place, reasons that have to do with the pace of change in the world and a generalized uncertainty about the future. Your disciplines are affected just as much by the same forces." I looked around. "Iain Chambers (1990) calls it living in doubt, 'deliberately weakening the power of ..... voice and setting it amongst other voices' (p.107), in an effort to keep questions open rather than bring closure to them."

"Excuse me, Laura, but the problem of change is one of the main reasons for selecting stories as a method. Stories inhere all the complexities of life and organize them around the events as they are experienced by individuals. The stories of Mary Catherine Bateson (1989) address this problem directly, as do those of Lorri Neilson (1989) and Jennifer Horsman (1990). Those writers chose stories, not to tell about their subjects, but to reflect the intricacies of their lives. Bateson, in particular, is concerned with the energy inherent in change and the challenge of growth. She chooses for her portraits women of diverse experience, of uncommon will."

"Yes," I continued, "that is why I chose stories as one of the methodologies of this study. But the story of immigration and immigrant adaptation includes the statistical. That is the heritage of this field of study. To deny the power of the statistical in interpreting immigrant experience would be like telling half a story. Our interpretation would be skewed toward the individual, devaluing the stories of the many. It would be like trying to consider immigration as a phenomenon isolated from employment, health or community development. The challenges facing immigrants are too great. We cannot ignore the most powerful tools used to describe or delete their experience."

"You feel that stories delete aspects of experience?" Storyteller challenged.

"They must by virtue of their focus on the life of a single individual," I countered. "The story of one person cannot be taken to reflect that of all newcomers, even if common elements of experience are present. Statistics render a different impression of the same subject, making the vast visible, but amputating its detail. As well, when we can consider statistics describing immigrants, we can peruse related portraits like those of employment, population change and economic growth. Each one of them amplifies the others in its magnification of a particular aspect of experience."

"Are you saying, then, that the issue of immigrants in adult education must be considered in the context of a broad range of issues challenging our disciplines

and communities?" Statistician appeared pleased and she now entered the discussion more energetically.

"Yes," I countered. "When we think about immigrants in Canadian society, perhaps we also need to consider the context of a society also undergoing change: the nature of work and employment, the family, urbanization, food production, the environment. There is no static centre upon which we can base statements about adaptation, integration, immigrants or Canadians."

"And how are we going to talk about these things without a common language?" moaned Storyteller, obviously disappointed that I was not about to take sides. "You know as well as I do how different my language is from Statistician's. How can we ever manage to speak together about our work without the aid and will of an interpreter like you?"

According to Chris Weedon (1987), "We can only begin with the tools we have in common, our language (p.21)," I responded, "and to understand how the language we use shapes the way that we experience the world. The words we learn and use shape the world we inhabit. 'Language is the place where actual and possible forms of social organization and their likely social and political consequences are defined and contested. yet it is also the place where our sense of ourselves, our subjectivity is *constructed*.' Lev Vygotsky (1978) says that the way that we come to understand the world is through the language of our families and our community. In this sense, language also constructs us.

The human world is organized by language, although its perception and expression vary greatly with discourse and language. When it comes to the situation of immigrants in Canadian education, however, both the dimension of discourse and that of language are implicated. Language is the most easily identifiable characteristic differentiating many immigrants from native-born Canadians. It is no coincidence that minimization of language difference between the native-born and newly-arrived has long been a primary objective of governments in providing for the education of immigrants.

But overlaid onto this play of languages — foreign, local, national, official, minority — are a variety of discourses characterizing the nature of the interaction. First, there is the discourse of language teaching and learning from the perspective of language teachers, as researched by Bernie Mohan (1986), H.H. Stern (1983), Ellen Bialystok (1985), Canale and Swain (1980) and others. It concerns the development of language teaching methodologies and the characterization of the language learning process. Second is the discourse of social scientists, such as John Porter (1965), John Berry (1987), R. Schermerhorn (1970), Warren Kalbach (1982), T.J. Samuel and T. Conyers (1986), and Derrick Thomas (1990) writing

about the effect of immigration on society. Such writing is recognizable by its strongly statistical research base and characteristic technical style. Government reports concerning immigration and immigrant education (Canada. Employment & Immigration Advisory Council, 1991; Thomas, 1990; Immigration Canada, 1989) most often reflect a social science perspective.

Responding to these reports are discourses charting the sociopolitical context of learning, from the point of view of educators, reports from groups like TESL Canada, 1981; TESL Manitoba, 1984; and individuals such as myself. Also, there are reports from groups representing the interests of immigrants and refugees, such as the Task Force on Mental Health (1988) and the National Organization of Immigrant and Visible Minority Women(n.d.). In fact, we can observe considerable overlap between the educational and social science discourses in sociopolitical writing which is typically persuasive, depending heavily on theories and statements from within those other discourses for its own power. For example, a number of writers, including Auerbach and Burgess (1985), Robert Phillipson (1988), Jim Cummins (1989), Bronwyn Norton Pierce (1989), and Alistair Pennycook (1990), have critiqued the stance of neutrality assumed by contemporary language teaching theorists. These critiques of the treatment of language and education in society hold in common a perspective of educational practice as elemental to the economic and political structure of the social world as it has developed historically, locating the topic of language education within the interpretive framework of critical theory. Note the scope and direction of the critique: Auerbach & Burgess are concerned with the situation of adult immigrants to North America; Cummins writes about the situation of cultural minority children in American schools; Phillipson considers the implications of English language teaching in the international community; Pierce is concerned with political consequences of a populist movement for "People's English" in South Africa. That such divergent concerns can be seen to coalesce around the teaching of English demonstrates the pivotal role of language, or, more specifically, languages, in the global community.

I am trying to challenge the widespread assumption that language learning and cultural integration have some kind of magical cause and effect relationship. I think that this assumption has been very damaging to the project of community in Canada. It has meant that most of our efforts to involve immigrants have been placed on changing them — fixing them up, really — rather than on questioning the changing character of the community itself. When the strategy doesn't seem to work — immigrants still cannot find appropriate employment or education, or they have ongoing social problems — we ask for more English and longer training in the belief that increased quantity alone will resolve the problem."

Now both of my guests grew quiet, seemingly drawn into their own thoughts. I wondered how I could convey what I meant both to Storyteller and Statistician so that they could understand the need to explore possibilities that exist in the spaces between people, between immigrants and Canadians, between men and women, between statistics and narrative.

"Suppose," offered Storyteller tentatively, "we try what you suggest, Laura. What would be the result?"

"Why don't we just try it," Statistician contributed. "But I'm afraid I don't have much experience with this sort of thing. You'll both have to help me."

"It wasn't long ago that I felt just like you do, Statistician," I said. I read a lot of different authors as I searched for a method for my study. I reviewed theory after theory, looking at the outcomes of narrative studies, the ins and outs of ethnographic work. In the back of my mind, though, was my awareness that it is statistics which occupies centre stage in the literature of immigration and adaptation in Canada. How could I hope to open up the dialogue about immigration and adaptation without addressing this reality?

It was that word, 'dialogue', which was key to my response. I had been reading quite a lot about hermeneutics at that time, but my reading was all in theory: Gadamer, Ricoeur, Caputo. I had no sense of the connection between such theory and my own work. But I read an article on hermeneutics written by a teacher educator, David Smith, from the University of Lethbridge, which addressed connections between hermeneutic theory and practice. Smith (1991) observes that:

> the hermeneutic modus has more the character of conversation than, say, of analysis and the trumpeting of truth claims. When one is engaged in a good conversation, there is a certain quality of self-forgetfulness as one gives oneself over to the conversation itself, so that the truth that is realized in the conversation is never the possession of any of the speakers or camps, but rather is something that all concerned realize they share in together. (p.198)

It was at that point that I realized that what I had already conceived of doing by employing multiple methodologies and by intending this discussion we are now involved in was, in fact, hermeneutic.

"You mean that we have already been doing it ?" Statistician asked.

"Yes, we have," I admitted. "I believe we have been exploring perspectives on adult immigrants in education that we have each brought to this table in an effort to open up our interpretations of the whole. That's what I meant earlier when I talked about knowledge as no longer unified, truth as unstable."

"I think it's a little presumptuous to be engaging in such a discussion without immigrants themselves represented," contended Storyteller.

"You are quite correct," I countered. "And in the best of all possible worlds, they would be represented here today. But I don't think that precludes our discussion. After all, everyone present — except me — is really just an artifact of this research. This meeting is a device to draw two very different portraits of the same issue into conversation."

Statistician and Storyteller stared first at each other, then at me.

"I was thinking about some of the language we have used in talking about immigrants, today. You might be interested to know, for instance about 'adaptation'. It comes from the Latin *adaptare*, expressing movement toward fitting, and inheres a notion of an unstated, yet fixed thing to fit into. 'Integration', on the other hand, is drawn from the Latin *integer*, and has the notion of many parts constituting a whole. I find it curious to think, though, how often I have heard these terms used almost interchangeably, without question as to their meanings."

"Hm, you made me think about Jan and his struggle to compete with Canadians," Storyteller wondered aloud. "Do you think that he was expressing a desire to adapt or to integrate?"

"Based on my understanding of the labour market, Storyteller," offered Statistician, "Jan is talking about what we call adaptation. But there are two different ways that we can look at this issue. We can talk about the role of immigrants as they fill labour shortages that arise — that seems to be adaptation. We can also think about the effect that immigrants have on demand for goods and services, and their need for services like settlement counselling and language training. These forces apply pressure on the system, requiring accommodation from the mainstream. This second interpretation, I think, more closely matches what you have said about integration: there is accommodation on all sides and the whole is constantly changing."

"You make it sound so easy," hissed Storyteller, "like a formula in a textbook. How can you talk about the accommodation of immigrants by the system when you have read what happened to both Azar Bahman and to Dave in our education system? Each of them managed to get a place, yes, but in Azar's case, getting in did not mean an opportunity to learn. As for Dave, I think the school demanded that he adapt in order to be successful in the programme. His school gave almost no consideration for the skills and training he brought to his programme. They did almost nothing to accommodate his particular needs. He was placed in a course, and he followed it."

I agreed with Storyteller, to a point. "Yes, it's true that they both had a rough time at school, but I think it is also interesting to consider what those four people think about education and change here and what they imagine is possible as an alternative to what they experienced. When I spoke with them together a few weeks ago (personal communication, March 6, 1993), I asked them about how the system could change so that newcomers do not have to face many of the same difficulties they did. Here are a few of their comments:

> **Dave:** I think that adjustment has to be painful. When you come to a new place and you have to adapt, there should be a problem. But if we can monitor, we can think about a better system when we receive newcomers, so maybe we can use their experience and background. That doesn't mean there's no problem, but easier. Canadians have problems too!
>
> **Jan:** They will have problems. Maybe not the same problems, maybe different ones. People will always have problems.

I found it extremely interesting that they all agreed that change involves a certain amount of discomfort, and that no amount of planning or programming will change that. But I found Dave's comments that Canadians have problems, too, to be illustrative of the connections he has made for himself. For Dave, many of the problems faced by immigrants are similiar to those of Canadians. Why single them out for special treatment?"

"So Dave is thinking integratively, showing that the problems faced by immigrants are not so dissimilar from those of Canadians," observed Storyteller.

"I found even more interesting what the four immigrants who participated in my study had to say about their own stories," I continued. "They saw a twofold need for such information. First, they felt that both prospective and new immigrants could benefit from reading about their experiences. They thought that many newcomers would be able to learn from things that they did and didn't do. Their stories themselves could lead to a greater awareness of education and adaptation issues among immigrants.

But they also talked about a second strategy. Here's what Azar said:

> I asked some Canadian people to read the stories and they are very, very changed. People sometimes look at me and say 'hello', but now they ask me about Dave and about Jan and about Amy. They want to know: 'Did you see them?' They want to know what they are doing. Before they never asked me about anybody. But now they ask me about you. I am happy. Now these people are changed. They say 'I'm sorry for what happened to you. We think everything now is OK because in Canada is relaxed and easy. We didn't have a hard time like you.

> People should write and talk and not just think about it. Many people know very little about our countries. They say: 'Oh, Iran — terrorists!' It's true! That's what they say!

And Dave:

> I want Canadian people when they read the story they can have a different, a new view of immigrants, especially Vietnamese people. Usually, they don't know. They don't have time. They go to work and go home, take a look at the paper and see Vietnamese gangster. 'Oh! Again! Somebody killed by a Vietnamese gangster!' But still a lot of Vietnamese people have to go through a hard experience to try to be successful and contribute to the country. But just because they don't talk about it doesn't mean they don't exist.

"Each of the story tellers felt quite strongly about the need for Canadians to understand their experience. They expressed concern that immigrants are thought of as somebody else, not Canadians. But immigrants are living here and will live here their whole lives. Canadians need to think about that, too. They can't just think that immigrants are taking jobs. They have to begin to think that immigrants, too, are Canadians."

"I understand these concerns, but I don't know what more can be done about them," observed Statistician. "There have been, and continue to be, many statistically-based reports produced to demonstrate that immigrants potentially affect employment in more positive than negative ways (eg. Samuel & Conyers, 1986; Fallick, 1992). There are, after all, statistics to document trends both in immigration and the economy."

"I suppose that's Laura's point, though," interjected Storyteller. You have been very active in gathering descriptive statistics relating to immigration and the economy, and that information has been very useful for producing all kinds of reports which detail the facts of the situation. But such reports cannot extend into the lived world of people in the community, and yet they are used to underpin social policies such as education for immigrants. Just as we have explored the interdependence of our views here today, there is a need to challenge and combine the efforts of statisticians and storytellers as a regular practice of research. The problems of the world are such that no single methodology can be expected to represent information or issues adequately."

I thought to myself how well-placed Storyteller's word 'challenge' had been. Challenge was what Jean-Francois Lyotard (1984) intended in his critique of the application of technology in an increasingly complex world, what Bruner meant when he talked about paradigmatic and narrative ways of knowing about the same thing. Michel de Certeau (1984) addressed the same thing when he said that:

> A particular problem arises when, instead of being a discourse on other discourses, as is usually the case, theory has to advance over an area where there are no longer any discourses. There is sudden unevenness of terrain: the ground on which verbal language rests begins to fail. The theorizing operation finds itself at the limits of the terrain where it normally functions, like an automobile at the edge of a cliff. Beyond and below lies the ocean. (p.61)

Iain Chambers (1990) addresses the problem more specifically to that of community:

> Once alien categories turn out to involve innumerable bodies and mortal forms of difference: not black people, or the Jews, or women, in the abstract, but real, historical, living individuals who emerge in and from different histories, languages, memories and experiences. To reorganize our thought around these differences can represent a vital attempt to escape from a monolithic and repressive language that has perpetuated so much tyranny and horror, so much fear. (p.106)

It was Statistician's turn to speak. "It seems to me that although we are from very different places, Storyteller, that we have spent this morning together in a place which neither of us can claim as our own. In all honesty, I must tell you that, at this moment, I feel quite challenged by the experience, but also renewed by thoughts of the possibilities of collaboration with you. I know that we've had difficulties arriving at a place where we can speak together, but, after all, we are here now and we are interested in similar things, aren't we?"

It was one of those infrequent moments of opportunity, a moment which called me to speak or forever hold my piece. "We have talked about many similar subjects, it seems, from different angles. What if we tried to overlay some of those elements without demanding a seamless fit? What if we put everything onto this table?"

I pulled out a large sheet of paper and placed it in the centre of the table where Statistician and Storyteller had removed the tea and cookie things. Then I offered each person a felt marker and invited them each to write.

"Well," began Storyteller, "from my point of view, I heard a lot about the lives of immigrants. I heard about their tremendous struggles to get here and the equally difficult battle they face in trying to create a place for themselves in Canada."

"And how would you characterize some of those struggles, Storyteller?" Statistician beamed.

"They had to do with many things. Each of the people I talked to, though, spoke about the difficulty in finding appropriate English classes for what they

wanted to learn. They also spoke about English as it relates to getting more education in Canada."

"So, language is an issue we both addressed." Statistician wrote 'language' in big letters near the top of the page. "I looked at various aspects of language learning, from mother tongue proficiency and how it relates to knowledge of English, to the proportion of LVA clients who had studied some English before coming to Canada, to a description of English proficiency levels among the same group."

Storyteller picked up her marker and wrote 'education' beside language. Then she wrote 'change' under both of them. Statistician was also ready to write, and added 'English', 'mother tongue' and 'proficiency' to the list under language.

"What about education?" I interjected. I see that you have put it directly beside language. Is that what you intended or do you think that education should have its own category?"

Statistician spoke now. "No, I think that it is sufficiently clear, from the information that I have provided, how interconnected language and education are. It's not really useful to separate them."

"I would agree, Statistician. All of the participants in my study spoke about education in relation to goals they had for themselves. Language seemed to be a part of education to each of them rather than a separate undertaking." Storyteller now wrote 'skills/training' and 'employment' under education.

"And what do you think about counselling, Storyteller?" Statistician asked.

"After all, my information was made possible through counselling interviews. I think that each of the 5002 people who are represented in the database had serious questions they were trying to gain answers to. The total number itself is quite telling of the need for counselling."

"I couldn't agree more, Statistician" responded Storyteller. I'm just not sure where I would place counselling relative to the other terms we've written on this paper. Does counselling belong closer to language or closer to education?"

"It's an aspect of both, don't you think?" I jumped in. "I was wondering about that myself. Where would I place counselling in the whole picture? Counselling is a link between people and education, but, as you have pointed out, Statistician, language is an aspect of education. So counselling connects languages, too. It also deals with the skills/training aspect of education."

"Yes. Counselling goes between, explaining education questions in language terms and language questions in education terms." Statistician continued.

"But it's not an equivalent term to language and education because it serves as a support function. Could we put it here [indicates above and between language and education] to show that it relates to both in an exterior kind of way?"

"If we place counselling in that position," Storyteller interjected, "I think we should allow a corresponding position for community. I remember what Dave said about the help he got from people within the Vietnamese community and at TECH from other students. Jan also talked about the support he got from friends. I would suggest we place 'community' here [indicates below and between language and education]."

Statistician seemed pensive. "If we consider the whole range of clients registering for counselling with LVA, we include those with limited literacy in their own languages as well as those with good formal education. Community would be especially important for those with limited literacy. I think that such individuals must face a different kind of adjustment when they come here. If they don't read and write very well, they have to have other ways of getting information."

"You've made a very interesting point, Statistician," Storyteller said. That reminds me of the comments that Azar Bahman and Amy Sham made. Amy spoke about the need to get together with others and to contribute to the community. Azar talked about the social isolation she felt. I think we need to add 'community participation' as an aspect of education, don't you?"

"You mean in addition to the community itself?" Statistician seemed puzzled.

"I think that Storyteller is speaking of the development of community participation as a process." I observed. "In that way, I agree that it is both part of education as well as the broader environment."

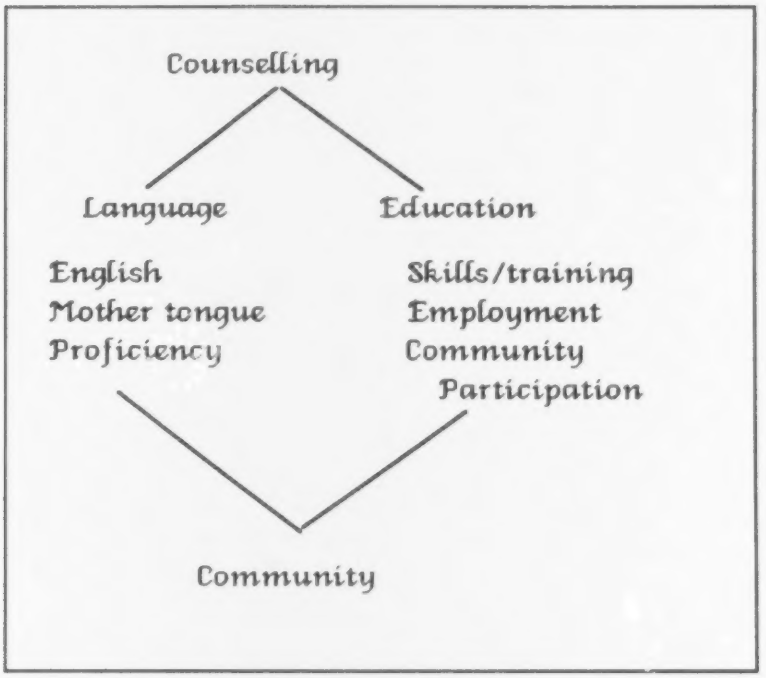

Figure 17. Immigrant Participation in Adult Education: Contributing Features

"And what about the financial aspects of participation?" Statistician had brought up a practical point. "I think that almost every person that you talked to, Storyteller, spoke about some aspect of support for education, whether it be grants to individuals or funding for courses."

"An interesting point!" Storyteller was amused at this question. "Well, where would I put funding? I suppose that question of funding permeates all of the areas we have identified. Part of that would be government funding, but I think we also have to consider the contributions of individuals to their own education as part of funding as well."

"So you wouldn't put it anywhere, then," Statistician followed, cautiously.

"Anywhere, everywhere. What's the difference? If we write funding down in one particular place on this paper, we will stop thinking about education in terms of the learners and start thinking only in financial terms. I think we should put it aside for now."

I had a sense that we were moving beyond the defensiveness of our earlier conversations into a new kind of communication, no matter how tentative it might be. Yet I felt awkward about it. I sensed I had lost control of events in my own house and that I no longer knew where things were going. Statistician and Storyteller had set aside some of their hostilities and seemed to be honestly enjoying each other's comments.

"It seems that we are describing the context of education from the perspective of people working with immigrants," I offered. "It is a wonderful accomplishment that we have been able to allow aspects of our own insights into association with those of others."

"It's true," Statistician replied for both of them. "Although we haven't allowed the funding issue to be located within our figuring, the subject of money still looms large in any discussion of education. And we have to deal with the reality that we are not talking about a discrete group in a discrete community. Immigrants live within a broader community which includes a great variety of people. Their educational needs must be considered within that broader context."

"That's how we came to do the studies in the first place, though, wasn't it?" Storyteller now inserted herself. "We chose this topic because we realized that education is not responding adequately to the needs of immigrants. And now we are back where we began, contemplating the participation of immigrants in adult education."

"How do you think that our work might inform the project of adult education in Canada?"

Chapter 7 – Adult Immigrants in Canadian Education: Seeking Connections in a Changing Community

From the very particular perspective of a counsellor working in an immigrant settlement agency this study has explored the problem of adult education. Although the circumstances of my research may, at first, seem at odds with the institutionally-dominated projects characterizing much current research work in this field, I hope that the reader has begun to understand why I have remained with the people and the issues beyond the school walls, with the immigrants in our community. The stories of Azar Bahman, Jan, Dave and Amy Sham are eloquent in their description of the Alberta's educational system's inability to engage the diversity of skills and experience they represent: the statistical profile of the clients of the Language and Vocational Assessment Service offers indications of the requirement for literacy and academic upgrading, vocational training and employment assistance within the immigrant community. This chapter will address Statistician's final question in Chapter 6 — "How do you think that our work might inform the project of adult education in Canada?" — by releasing the stories and the statistical data presented in this study into the context of the educational mainstream. In the realm of possibility demanded by Statistician's question, one can begin to identify the scope of what might be as well as to question how educational spaces might be redefined to better reflect the combined experience of immigrants and Canadian-born.

A. Immigrant Adaptation in a Context of Economic and Social Change

In the case of immigrants, arguments about education will always turn to the subject of language, as will mine. First, however, I would like to consider the context of the Canadian community and the pressures now affecting adult education. As I am writing, in 1993, I have sitting beside me a stack of documents about planning for Alberta and Canada's future, produced by government, academics and private industry. None of them draws directly upon the resources of the adult education community: all of them implicate adult education in their designs. It is almost as if current notions of a "system" for adult education are themselves a barrier to reconceptualization. In fact, management analysts D'Cruz and Rugman (1992) incorporate universities, community colleges and research

institutes together with health, social service and cultural industries into a classification called "non-business sector". They envision direct linkages between business organizations and non-business enterprises, emphasizing that the flexibility demanded to encourage competitiveness will mean that such arrangements are likely to be linked to projects (ie. temporary contracts), and that funding for programmes should be more directly linked to the particular needs of industry. Citing the example of such an arrangement already struck between a Canadian firm and their local school board (p.38), the authors show that the existing "hobby" course-dominated curriculum was modified to highlight basic literacy, functional mathematics and analytical reasoning, resulting in higher participation rates by workers in the community.

In *A Lot to Learn*, published by the Economic Council of Canada (1992), Council Chairman Judith Maxwell refers to the findings of several recent Council studies, and goes so far as to say that "in each of these major projects, it became clear that the high levels of participation in education obscured high rates of illiteracy and unemployment, and serious mismatching between jobs and skills." (p.vii) Participation in education, by itself, does not ensure learning. *A Lot to Learn (ALTL)*, while never addressing the particular situation of immigrants, nevertheless speaks about some of the same issues confronting immigrants attempting to integrate into Canada's workforce, as identified by participants in this study. Among others, these problems include:

a) articulation between different levels of schooling. Dave (Chapter 5) moved quickly from an ESL course to a technical school, but had to rely more heavily on support from his cultural community than he could on schools. Current wisdom concerning immigrant adaptation suggests sending immigrants to work as soon as possible. As Dave points out, however, it was far cheaper to go to to school soon after his arrival rather than later, after he had started a family and had accepted greater financial responsibility. Dave's scenario is similar to the situation of apprentices presented in *ALTL* (p.21). At a time when he is willing to live a meagre existence and work hard to adapt the technical skills he brings to Canada, he is pressured to take a dead-end job, but resists.

b) articulation between schools and employers. All of the stories in Chapter 5 illustrate this problem. In the case of Jan, there is uncertainty about what he can do with his background in psychology. ESL courses proved not to be helpful because of his level of oral English, yet he could find no other educational assistance to support his integration. He managed to get a project job for two years and is once again unemployed, no closer to understanding what he can do in Canada. Azar Bahman sought to get the literacy skills she needed to allow her to

use her nursing training and experience and work in the health care field. She is currently working in a nursing home, but does not have the English literacy skills to complete the upgrading course she has been offered. Amy Sham, with her background in education, has now taken three government sponsored courses designed to help her gain employment, yet has found no regular employment related to any of these courses. Dave struggled for almost a year after leaving TECH because he did not have the skills to know where and how to apply for employment. Regarding the outcomes of current strategies aimed at immigrant adaptation, Alberta Economic Development and Tourism (1993) observes that "unless immigrants have Canadian education and work experience, they receive only 88% of what non-immigrants earn, and take anywhere from 15 to 22 years to catch up to their Canadian-born counterparts." Yet unless immigrants gain some information about how they might adapt their skills for employment, planning for education remains a matter of speculation.

c) appropriate counselling. *ALTL* identifies improving career counselling as a strategy to enhance coherence between education and employment (p.25), indicating that a lack of useful information, academic bias and lack of industrial experience mitigate against the success of current counselling approaches. In addition to these problems, counsellors in many colleges, technical school or university settings have inadequate preparation to work with immigrants whose life experience and training may differ significantly from many in the Canadian-born population.

All of the participants in the narrative component of my study emphasized the importance of coordinated counselling efforts to support immigrants during the integration process. Specific problems, however, were described. Dave, for instance, spoke about the foreignness of the counselling concept in the Vietnamese culture and indicated that he really relied on his own judgment in educational decisions because his traditional counselling network, his family, was not in Canada. At the same time, Dave offers qualified acknowledgement of the need for counselling among newcomers in Canada: "after the counselling, they should have a programme to suit." Counselling services for immigrants need to be intimately connected with educational and employment opportunities in the community. As well, they need to respond to the specific problems associated with interpreting already acquired knowledge and skills in a new cultural environment.

Azar Bahman speaks graphically about the impact of inadequate personal and vocational counselling in the Iranian community in Edmonton. In a discussion of factors affecting family disintegration, she says of many men she knows:

> if they were encouraged to go and get some training. But, after that, they need help to find jobs, not just training and then dropping them. They know they cannot find jobs. But people shouldn't be left to sit at home. If the government agrees to sponsor someone for training, they must go to work.

Azar underscores the connection which must be made between counselling and articulation within the educational and employment system.

In Jan's case, counselling is seen as part of "networking", getting into the Canadian system.

> You see, in each country, networks exist. Like in Poland, we had a network, but we had a different kind of network. You had to be a party member or you had to know party officials. It doesn't matter about your background, doesn't matter about your education or what you can do, the most important thing was knowing somebody. Here, I know that it's a similar situation, especially at higher levels, you know. You want up the ladder, you want to get a better job, you have to know some people. But if you come here with training and you start by getting into cleaning, it's like you put your feet into the swamp: the longer you stay there, you are deeper in the swamp. It's difficult to escape from there.

Without the family and social networks available to many Canadians, immigrants often spend inordinate amounts of time, searching for information and assistance that will facilitate their transition into the workforce, sometimes in vain.

In Amy Sham's story we see that business immigrants, those who arrive in Canada with large sums of money to invest, may also require counselling support in making transitions into the community. Like Amy, not all business immigrants have been business people before. Amy's first few years in Canada show a haphazard pattern of decision-making, resulting in financial loss and considerable personal anguish. She applied for courses that came to her attention, but which have not been useful in helping her integrate into the community. It is disturbing to read how accepting Amy is of her difficulties in connecting training and employment.

> We can get a job in Canada easily if we don't mind what kind of job. But if we want a job we like, so we have to pay. We have to pay everything and then we get results. Of course, we want to invest. So it means that Hong Kong people want to invest the spirit, and then we get a better job. Most of the people refuse to go back to school because they know they have to study hard in school. They do not want that.

The fear that people experience in facing a new situation at school is blamed on their own inadequacies. Amy does not expect mainstream counselling and educational programmes to extend into her community.

d) social cohesion. *ALTL* introduces the concept of *social cohesion* as a key factor separating the Canadian education system from those of more competitive countries, notably Germany and Japan. Social cohesion is defined in two ways relating to those countries values: in Japan, "social cohesion based on a strong sense of belonging to the community is a key factor bringing coherence to the Japanese learning system", while "German society also clearly signals to its children the goals and rewards attached to education" (p.42). The implication is that Canadians do not experience education as a way of belonging to the community and that our education system does not give sufficient signals about rewards attached to education. Perhaps this problem needs to be considered, however, as it relates to the characteristics of each community.

A major difference between Canada and both Japan and Germany important to the project of furthering social cohesion is the degree of cultural diversity among citizens. Japan is ethnically a rather homogenous state whose citizens share thousands of years of history and values. Germany, on the other hand, has ethnic diversity, but treats its minorities differently than Canada does. While Canada has traditionally encouraged immigration in response to economic and labour needs (Canada. House of Commons, 1966), Germany has addressed the same problem by instituting a "guest worker" programme, admitting workers from a variety of countries whose purpose was specifically to work and who could never aspire to German citizenship (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1981). The project of encouraging social cohesion in a culturally-diverse community requires a conscious effort as Canadians work simultaneously to develop their identity as a people together with their economy (who they are and what they do). To miss this important understanding in the process of developing a strategy for global competition is to ignore who Canadians are and where their strengths as a nation lie.

The same point has been made as it pertains to the global stage, for the same values which permit harmonious relationships in a culturally-diverse community such as Canada's also facilitate international understanding. Botkin et al.(1979, p.116), writing for the Club of Rome about the problem of learning in a rapidly changing world contend that:

> heritage can become even more relevant to people if emphasis is put on the human role in its continuous creation rather than on the museum collections of its artifacts of by-gone times. This outlook that stresses the role of diverse people in creating culture could become the backbone of the concept of "global interdependence". Interdependence does not necessarily require "world government"; but it does imply global comprehension and cooperation, based on a set of ethical

> norms that prevent sovereignty from becoming cultural aggression.

Attention to the variable of culture and identity should be a central consideration in Canada's planning for economic development and change. It is impossible to talk about improving the performance of the educational system without considering the basic characteristics of the people the system is for. Striving to uncritically mimic the education systems of more culturally-homogenous societies will do little to capitalize on the potential strengths of culturally astute Canadians in the global marketplace. Only by engaging the images and talents — academic, technological, artistic, athletic — of a wide range of Canadians in enterprises which challenge the stifling status quo of educational conformity will we ever uncover strands of a shared Canadian identity. Such an undertaking is likely, as well, to give rise to novel responses to problems, responses which cannot be predicted from the vantage point in history of modern Canadians. Is there today a vision of a homogenous Canada or a homogenous future in any corner of this country? In struggling to organize technologically and socially for the unknown, would we wish for a people that is other than eminently creative and adaptive?

B. Immigrants in Canadian Adult Education

There is very little information in the literature of adult education concerning the experience of immigrants or minority adults as learners. Instead, there tend to be several separate fields, including adult education (which deals, for the most part, with "mainstream" concerns), English as a second language (which focuses specifically on the problem of language in education), and multicultural studies. Jovita Ross-Gordon (1991), an American researcher, attempted a database search of multicultural issues in the literature of adult education between 1985 and 1990 and found very few articles or dissertations on this topic. Of her findings, she remarked that "by and large, research continues to reflect the predominant patterns of participation in formal adult education. For the most part, non-white men and women, along with the non middle class and women in general, remain a group set aside for 'future study.'"(p.3). This lack of literature itself may serve to discourage the determined interest of many other researchers.

Such silence within the educational community presents, when confronted, multiple dimensions. In addition to the more subtle political implications of absence described by Ross-Gordon (1991) above, there is the reality of Canadians' treatment of minority cultures within their own history, (see Ho, 1992 as well as Chapter 2), and their seeming inability to confront deeply-held assimilationist attitudes, even though official policy statements may suggest otherwise (see Bill C-93, The

Multiculturalism Act). Finally, there is the very nature of the immigration process and the problem of cohesive group identity. Newcomers are constantly arriving into the immigration stream. Their membership includes people of diverse nationalities, philosophies, languages, and value systems. Immigrants do not get together to share information or to develop a political identity. Most will struggle economically and socially for some time but will gradually find places of some sort for themselves within the community. With settling, new priorities, such as paying bills must be confronted. And when does an immigrant stop being an immigrant? As demonstrated in Chapter 4, in discussions of the significance of length of Canadian residence, some immigrants continue to seek language and settlement assistance after many years in Canada; others do not. Fortunately, the most articulate and talented will quickly find a place within the established order of things; unfortunately, they will typically leave those with the most difficulties to fend for themselves. Just as they are getting enough background knowledge of our political and social systems to have an impact on settlement and language training policies and programmes, these same skilled people are already gaining interest in other issues. And, of course, new people are arriving.

Thinking about language and content

We know that immigrants do participate in adult education, and that language has been an important consideration in that participation. What remains to be addressed to increase understanding among educators and effectiveness of immigrant participation is the character of the relationship between the learning of language and of content relative to the broad variety of education and experience represented in the adult immigrant population at any given time. Some literature does exist to support such a process. Indicators similar to those used by the Language and Vocational Assessment Service at Catholic Social Services could be used to describe features of educational range, notably mother tongue proficiency and English proficiency. Each continuum ranges from low to high proficiency. Mother tongue proficiency correlates with educational background while English proficiency measures only skills learned in English.

a. Language and literacy in adult bilingual programmes

In considering the needs of those at the low end of both of these measures of proficiency, that is those with limited English and education in mother tongue, some work has been done. American literacy educator Podeschi (1990) writes about programming for Hmong refugees in the United States, and observes that traditional North American beliefs about literacy education (i.e. helping the individual to help him or herself) contradict the collective cultural values of some communities. He

describes a programme which involved instructors from the Hmong community, and remarks (p. 60) of their impact:

> The students are better able to connect their learning to their own experience. They feel that they learn more, are less stressed, are treated with more respect, and are more comfortable being with other Hmong. Whereas they see class time going quickly here, time moved slowly in their earlier classes and they 'could not wait to get home.'

The Hmong instructor was able to use his knowledge of the cultural traditions and educational expectations of this group of learners. As well, he used the Hmong language to help learners make conceptual connections in their new environment. Similar findings are reported by Canadian literacy investigators Derwing and Malicky (1992) who studied use of a bilingual approach in adult programming in a class for Khmer refugees in Edmonton. Their advice is that "the less education in the first language a person has, the more important it is to involve instructors who speak that language" (p.224), based not only on changes in student literacy, but also on changes learners have been able to make within the context of their lives.

The issue of literacy among cultural groups whose experience differs significantly from most North Americans suggests that the meaning of literacy itself is not static, but may vary from place to place, culture to culture, and over time. Although most North American definitions focus on "functional skills" or "basic education" (Southam, 1988; Burnaby & Bell, 1989; Movement for Canadian Literacy, 1991; Statistics Canada, 1990; Chisman, 1989), bilingual literacy programmes tend to have a much broader participatory focus (Wallace, 1989; Derwing & Malicky, 1992; Podeschi, 1990), developed through cultural understanding and exploration involving a teacher from their own cultural group. In this view, literacy development focuses on learners' increasing ability and confidence to make sense of their lives and the world.

b. The literature of language and content

As discussed in Chapter 2, approaches developed for those with higher than basic proficiency in mother tongue and English have focussed on the functional use of the target language. Communicative approaches developed in Europe and North America in the 1970's and 1980's (van Ek & Alexander, 1977; Munby, 1978; Canale & Swain, 1980) successfully raised awareness of the intrinsic functionality of language, but did not succeed in actually connecting theorized functionality with real life experience. The problem for immigrant adults who register in such classes remains how to gain enough English skills to qualify for access to other kinds adult education and/or for better employment. They are aware that information networks exist, but want to know how to gain access to ones that assist long term

Canadians in defining their objectives, meeting the right people, making judicious decisions.

c. The problem of content

Is it possible to speak of the learning needs of immigrant learners in a continuous way, given the vast disparity of experience and approach described above? A central problem in conceptualization of continuity is the place of "content" in learning. Just what is content in "language and content" and who determines it? A common sense response to that question would suggest that content is what needs to be learned by learners. It is apparent, though, from the programmes described by Podeschi (1990), Derwing & Malicky (1992) and Wallace (1989), that content itself is not an unproblematic aspect of immigrant education. Learners need to make sense of their lives in terms of the community in which they now live as well as where they once lived. This view is consistent with critiques offered by Freire (1989), Mullard (1988), Giroux(1991) that traditional distributive approaches to content serve to marginalize minority learners rather than recognizing their knowledge and views as important contributions to a democratic community. These writers contend that much of the content of learning itself should be reframed as questions if schools are to involve learners with rather than induct them into the society in which they live. Political theorist Chantal Mouffe (1988), writing about the possibility of a democracy which responds to difference within the community, suggests that conflict is inherent in acknowledging the aspirations of various groups if our society is to become truly democratic.

The engagement with community in a process of change should be critical in a curricular context where learners' very presence is a direct outcome of global change. What does it mean if such engagement is not contemplated? In policy matters concerning the education of immigrants, the relationship between language and content is not dichotomous. Newcomers are not only learning language, they are learning to live and participate in Canada, and they are interpreting themselves and the community around them in ways that help to justify their past experience with the present.

This final point situates the central problem of this study. Even though many adult learners will claim that learning English is, in itself, a priority, their statements may be more indicative of an urgent need to clarify and articulate routes to their intended goals or even a desire to please teachers and other decision-makers. Second language proficiency may not be a primary goal for a great number of learners, nor is it a possibility for all second language learners. Many learners may seek only enough English for instrumental use (Lambert, 1967). Their interest in language learning is tied largely to what they will be able to do with this new

information. For some others, and this is a serious consideration among immigrants and refugees, the process of language learning is long and slow and the progress made in existing programmes hardly worth the effort. As shown in Chapter 4, the relationship between length of residence in Canada and English proficiency is not as direct as has long been assumed. Learners who have been in this country for ten, twenty or more years still have English proficiency which could be described as basic: they have enough vocabulary and grammar to understand and be understood by others. These same people, in spite of their success in creating a place for themselves in Canada, would probably have difficulty accessing any kind of regular adult education or training programmes because their English skills are considered insufficient for study. Additionally, a minority of immigrant learners may have limited literacy and/or education in their first language. Other factors, such as extensive family responsibilities, memory difficulties due to torture or other trauma (Canadian Task Force on Mental Health Issues Affecting Immigrants and Refugees, 1988), or limited talent or motivation for language learning may also affect an individual's overall English proficiency. In any case, the outcome is the same. In a mechanistic educational system which places language and content in sequence, that is where English must be learned in order to qualify to receive "content", individuals can spend enormous amounts of time in ESL classes with little demonstrated progress. In spite of the fact that they present a profile of ability, gender, age and class similar to that of Canadian-born individuals, immigrants may be denied access to content, not because of a lack of personal competence (Hymes, 1979), but English proficiency. As Hymes remarks, "liberality with regard to religion and sex does not seem to extend to speech" (p. 37). Policy makers and adult education programmers in a culturally diverse society such as Canada's must acknowledge the continuous nature of the language environment to facilitate access to content by all. Proficiency in an official language may be a possibility for many immigrants, but it is the totality of all languages in Canada which is our shared reality.

d. Developing an ecological view of language in the community

It is the connected and interactive nature of the concept of environment which first prompted me to wonder about the context of language teaching within its broader social dimension. I reasoned, as have others before me, that since language teaching occurs at junctures between diverse groups throughout the world, its effect must be recognized as more than linguistic or social. The concept of language as environment, however, is not a new one. Bilingual linguist Einar Haugen, writing in 1972, traces the metaphors which have been applied to language from the evolutionary model (survival of the fittest languages), to the biological

model (language is a living thing), to the instrumental model (language is a tool to serve human goals). He was struck by the parallels between the interrelatedness of life forms and their environments that he found in ecological writing and the socially embedded character of language.

> Language ecology would be a natural extension of this kind of study and has long been pursued under such names as psycholinguistics, ethnolinguistics, linguistic anthropology, sociolinguistics, and the sociology of language. Linguists have been concerned with it in their work on language change and variability, on language contact and bilingualism, and on standardization. (p.327)

Haugen's perspective on language attempts to situate each relative to the others, facilitating their classification in terms of their treatment of social features such status, intimacy and formality. It does not consider the features of a particular social or political environment as they relate to language use within it.

Melanie Mikes (1986), in her discussion of language planning, does introduce the element of the political into her characterization of language and environment.

> The individual belongs to the culture or cultures of the society in which he has been brought up, and that the individual acquires this culture (including the mother tongue or other language) from earliest childhood. The conflict is not at the level of ethnic freedom, but belongs rather to the sociopolitical sphere. It may develop within an ethnic collectivity (as happens in Quebec or Wales or among the elites of developing African countries) as a result of former or present political or economic domination by another ethnic collectivity, and may be provoked by conflicting class interests inside the ethnic collectivity itself. (pp.17-18)

The focus for Mikes' treatment of language and its environment is the school. She proposes a typology which will allow decision makers to analyze whether language education policies respond to factors within the family and the broader community. Mikes' model is useful in its location of assumptions about language learning and conflicts regarding language and education. For example, a child may come to school speaking the family's mother tongue and encounter a teacher whose education and experience supports the assumption that the language of school is defacto **the** language of the community. The resolution of consequent conflicts between home and school will depend on prevailing community attitudes. Mikes' scheme is intended for classification and analysis of language policy decisions in basic education settings.

More recently, Israeli language planner Robert Cooper (1989) has directly addressed the connections between issues of social change and language planning. He notes that language planning is frequently implicated in programmes for literacy and educational enhancement in Third World countries (p. 171), although a strategy to improve educational opportunities may not, in and of itself, lead to improved economic conditions. Cooper situates the need for language planning within the context of social change, and identifies factors as varied as environmental change, science and technology, population change as pertaining to issues of language.

Having identified this increasing trend toward social contextualization of theory and practice in the fields of linguistics and language teaching, we should also recognize that these areas are not distinct in such an orientation. The past twenty years have given rise to parallel movements in the both the social and natural sciences. The philosophy of critical theory has provided a coherent critique of the ideology of capitalism and has stimulated both social and natural scientists to entertain the possibility of constructive alternatives to the reductionism characterizing much empirical research. In psychology, for example, there is some movement toward a view of the world in socio-historical-environmental context, as a process of social interchange — people in the world — with an emphasis on researchers actively situating themselves as agents of social change (Gergen, 1985; Saegert, 1987; Stokols, 1990). Theorists in the philosophy and sociology of education (Giroux & Simon, 1988; Illich, 1983; Shor, 1986; Freire, 1989) write about schooling which responds to the lived needs of the people in the community and criticize the reluctance of much of mainstream western education to relinquish abstracted notions of "knowledge" and "culture." The thread which weaves these myriad ideas together is the conceptualization of human experience as interactive with the social environment and the world containing it. That this movement should evolve concomitant with increasing public interest in the quality of the physical environment, in its preservation and enhancement is no coincidence. Themes of relativism, social responsibility, continuity, conservation and possibility of alternatives recur across both movements.

How does this orientation pertain to the particular situation of immigrant adults in education? Whether teachers are working with minority students, teaching internationally or teaching English as a foreign language in their own country, the selection of method or approach, the choice of materials and content, the power dynamics of teacher/student relations and even the location of the language programme within the total educational structure have implications which far exceed classroom objectives. This observation is especially significant in the Canadian context, where constant emphasis on the need to improve adult

immigrant language training (Canada. Immigration, 1990) without concomitant consideration of the fundamentally isolated location of most ESL programmes has served only to exert pressure on teachers and students to perform the miracle of English (learn quickly, but effectively), still in isolation from any mainstream interaction. Where is the corresponding emphasis within the educational system on the role of mainstream adult educators in adapting their programmes toward the needs of immigrant learners? There are examples such as the Polish Doctors Programme offered by the Toronto Board of Education, and the Trades and Occupational English Programme in Alberta, but across the mainstream of adult education in Canada there appears to be scarce recognition of language education as an integral part of the Canadian educational continuum.

C. Surveying the landscape of possibility: Immigrants go to school

How we treat the language education of adult immigrants depends on how we view their languages, as well as our official languages, as elements of a shared linguistic environment. A denial of linguistic diversity in adult education (and society in general) in the face of the actuality of multilingualism reveals much about the official Canadian ideology of language. A prominent researcher in bilingualism, Canadian Bruce Bain (1993) raises this same point as it relates to differing educational goals for students in French immersion, English as a second language or heritage language programmes, labelling such terms a "cryptic code", "which is a hindrance to critical discussions about issues of language" (p.72).

To discriminate in the provision of education (content) on the basis of competence in English (language) rather than personal competence reveals a systemic linguicism. This is defined by Skutnabb-Kangas (1988, p. 13) as "ideologies and structures which are used to legitimate, effectuate and reproduce unequal division of power and resources (both material and non-material) between groups which are defined on the basis of language (on the basis of their mother tongues)." Adult education, by virtue of its position in the development and education of citizens, has the possibility of promoting linguicism, that is, allowing access to regular education only if learners are able to meet English proficiency requirements) or of encouraging its demise by recognizing the place of minority languages within its framework.

With regard to the application of existing language and content theory to the particular situation of immigrants in adult education, then, a number of assumptions concerning the character of the environment and teaching practice should be examined. The first assumption is an unspoken one, that language teaching is value-free. There is little written about varieties of discourse, selection of

content, and the implications of each for social and economic participation by immigrants, and this is revealed in the limited and recent discussion in the literature of language and content. Both language and content teaching, however, inhere particular relationships between the teacher and her learners, as well as particular learning outcomes. Political economists Bowles and Gintis (1986, p. 160) write: "The tools of discourse facilitate practices, while in part constituting them through the forms of bonding and division they foster and through the limitations they place on the expression of goals and means of their attainment", paraphrasing Canadian visionary Marshall McLuhan's famous aphorism "The medium is the message". The selection of language as the focus of immigrant education bears a very particular message about Canadians' perceptions of who immigrants are and what they need to achieve success here. The educational environment is thus essentially political, involving, among other things, the selection of content, the choice of stance taken *vis a vis* the political and economic system, and the situation of the learner in decision-making. It is in the body of the educational system that shared aspirations for achievement and societal contribution have been expressed. What does it mean that we opt to require specific additional qualification for participation by a sizeable segment of society such as immigrants?

A second assumption which is made about the language and content issue is that only one language, the new language, can be used to convey content. Much of the writing about language and content focuses on programmes for students who are well-educated and already fairly proficient in English. Most of these adult students are preparing to study at English language universities and would, themselves, support an approach which effectively addresses their goal for second language learning in a content-rich context. The question of use of other languages or combinations of languages seldom, if ever, arises since energy is always directed toward a singular objective: effective English language learning. Brinton, Snow and Wesche (1989, p. 2) describe the objective thus: "the focus for students is on acquiring information via the second language and, in the process, developing their academic language skills". Benesch (1988a, p. 2) relates the objective to the need for learners to feel part of the academic community (and does not question the exclusionary practices of such groups):"they [second language learners] need practice in listening to, speaking, writing, and reading English in an academic context to ensure their continued membership in the community". Friedenberg and Bradley (1988, p. 7) simply begin from the premise that a certain base of English is prerequisite to other kinds of learning: "students should have an opportunity to acquire a general knowledge of English before attempting to learn a trade in a vocational school". This assumption is posited upon a static notion of the

educational environment in which the relationship between the learners' native language and the "target" language is seldom considered relative to the character of content or community.

A third assumption has to do with the scope of models for language and content teaching and their independence of any potentially-related social or educational environment; the language teacher reaches out for content and the language classroom becomes the content environment. In an article describing three types of language and content models, American second language educator Marianne Celce-Murcia (1989) gives practical advice for selecting an approach. Given a new group of students in an ESL programme, she advises teachers to get as complete a picture of the students as possible. "If good biodata are collected when this instrument is administered, then we also have the social, ethnic, and educational background of our learners" (p. 6). This is good general advice for language teachers, but Celce-Murcia includes no consideration of matching the students' profiles with a detailed analysis of the educational environment, or of documenting the points of dynamic intersection between the institution (instructional purpose) and language communities (personal goals) so that these could most effectively be exploited for the benefit of the learners.

One further assumption found in the literature of language and content concerns the location of models for language and content teaching. For the most part, these are firmly and uniquely established in the traditions of language teaching. There is very limited effort being made by most content area teachers, although those that have become involved have made a significant contribution in language teaching. Without increased cooperation with content area specialists, though, how can language teachers anticipate their eventual involvement (which we already assume) as partners in education? What kinds of accommodation on the part of mainstream educational environments are being made to respond to the particular content needs of immigrant learners? If the system as a whole remains inflexible, intact, the focus of change will always be upon the learners.

With regard to adult education, what must be acknowledged by language teachers, regular classroom teachers, language and content teachers, decision makers and by culturally-diverse societies generally, is the multifaceted nature of our language environment. Adherence to a view of content as accessible only through English, or through English or French, ignores the sometimes fluid/sometimes discontinuous character of the community language environment. Chapter 4 of this study reveals the tremendous range of English proficiency outcomes over time in Canada, demonstrating that to require a high degree of such skill is to disqualify a sizeable portion of immigrant adults from the possibility of

educational upgrading and many kinds of training. No amount of second language programming, counselling or prodding is going to alter the fact that people learn in a variety of ways and that a variety of responses to adaptation needs should accordingly be made. If our purpose in education is truly integrative, seeking more equitable participation by all groups, we need to find ways to develop educational opportunities which reflect shared values (ie. related to personal goals) rather than continue the ideology of domination through adherence to monolingualism (or official bilingualism).

D. A conceptual framework for language in multicultural adult education

I would like to propose a framework for considering language and content relationships relative to the universe of learner goals. The framework arises from my understanding of the educational community as culturally and linguistically diverse, and is an attempt to address the issue of immigrant language needs within the scope of broader adult education initiatives. The framework itself integrates two dimensions — Instructional Environment and Instructional Focus — which interact through their particular response to language (environment) and content (focus).

a. The instructional environment

Seen from the perspective of planning for language instruction, the instructional environment extends from language-sheltered (instruction in minority languages exclusively) settings to a segregated multicultural environment (multicultural classes for immigrants from all language backgrounds segregated from mainstream instruction) to an integrated multicultural environment (immigrants are integrated into mainstream multicultural classes). This classification allows programmers and learners themselves to identify and plan for learning environments responsive to the full range of immigrant adult learning needs. A **language-sheltered** environment may be indicated for new arrivals who

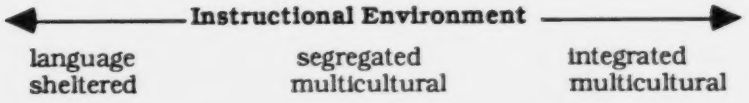

Figure 18. Immigrant Language Needs Situated as an Aspect of the Instructional Environment of Adult Education

have no English, learners with little formal education and limited mother tongue literacy, some types of skill training, some older learners, or for particular cultural community-based educational projects (such as health education, citizenship development). A **segregated multicultural** environment, isolating immigrants as a group for instruction (the most common type of programming currently available), should be regarded as transitional to a more integrated setting and should not be viewed as a viable comprehensive educational strategy. Examples of practical strategies within this area of the continuum are orientation (for those who already have some English), short term courses to prepare for integrated settings, short courses with immigrant specific content (eg. how the educational system works, strategies for coping in integrated settings, strategies for cooperation and collaboration, working in multi-ethnic settings). These same courses are also needed among Canadian-born learners, many of whom now come to an integrated multicultural setting with limited experience or understanding of how to cooperate across cultures.

b. Instructional focus

The dimension which concerns instructional interventions within the total environment is that of instructional focus. Figure 23 illustrates the range of instructional interventions possible, extending from an exclusive content focus to an exclusive language focus.

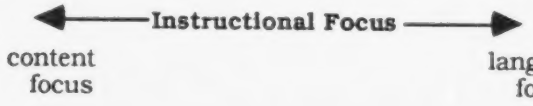

Figure 19. Language and Content as a Continuum for Focus of Instruction

This dimension concerns the selection of approach to appropriately address the goals, skills and needs expressed by learners. The nature of this dimension is situational, relating to specific learning needs: literacy needs, the special needs of seniors, needs for community development and social participation.

c. Constructing the framework

The interaction of these two dimensions provides a means of conceptualizing a range of possible strategies for combining language and content to respond to documented (Hynes, 1987; Ho, 1990; Ho, 1993) learner needs and goals. This is illustrated in Figure 20 (Approaches to content in multilingual settings: A

conceptual framework). The reader will immediately notice that, according to this framework, the most commonly available type of class for adult immigrants, the generic ESL programme, occupies only a very small area of the framework in terms of the range of anticipated needs and the nature of the environmental continuum. This is a serious concern for, while such programmes are of some use, their position, by virtue of their situation within the overall environment should be a transitional one. Generic ESL does not have a strong content focus, nor a strong integrative orientation. It is a kind of 'middling' model which is useful for initial orientation for some people, but has no specific purpose related to any particular employment, social or educational context. Its focus is isolating in terms of physical location of classes as well as communicative opportunities.

Of greater interest are the possibilities of approaches at the both extremes of the environmental dimension. At one end, programmes which are language-sheltered (ie. conducted in learners' primary languages) and have a language focus are available for many children through Heritage Language Programmes in Canada. My use of the term "language-sheltered", however, differs from the original use, described by Skutnabb-Kangas (1988, p.23) as synonymous with mother tongue maintenance. Skutnabb-Kangas' work focuses on the situation of language minority children in schools, and her intent in promoting language-sheltered environments is to encourage both cognitive and cultural development through support for mother tongue instruction. My work, on the other hand, addresses the situation of immigrant adults at school. In this case, the purpose for language shelter is primarily to support the learning of new content in a linguistically and culturally-familiar setting. The alternative is what is too often found in adult ESL programmes now and is described by Friedenberg and Bradley (1988, p.7) above: requiring learners to acquire some English before beginning instruction in content.

The possibilities of sheltered programmes for adults are immense but relatively untried, spanning the range of the instructional focus continuum. Many immigrants and refugees could access skill training and community systems at an earlier stage of their adaptation if programmes were available in their languages. This is a particularly important consideration among groups with limited mother tongue literacy or limited education, for whom traditional ESL classes are often not appropriate or successful. Provision of content instruction in minority languages should be considered as a practical response to the needs of individuals who clearly will require special help with language and employment over a long period of time. This is particularly apropos to the situation of many refugee adults who arrive from societies such as Cambodia and Ethiopia which are culturally and vocationally very different from Canada. Provision of first language environment instruction for

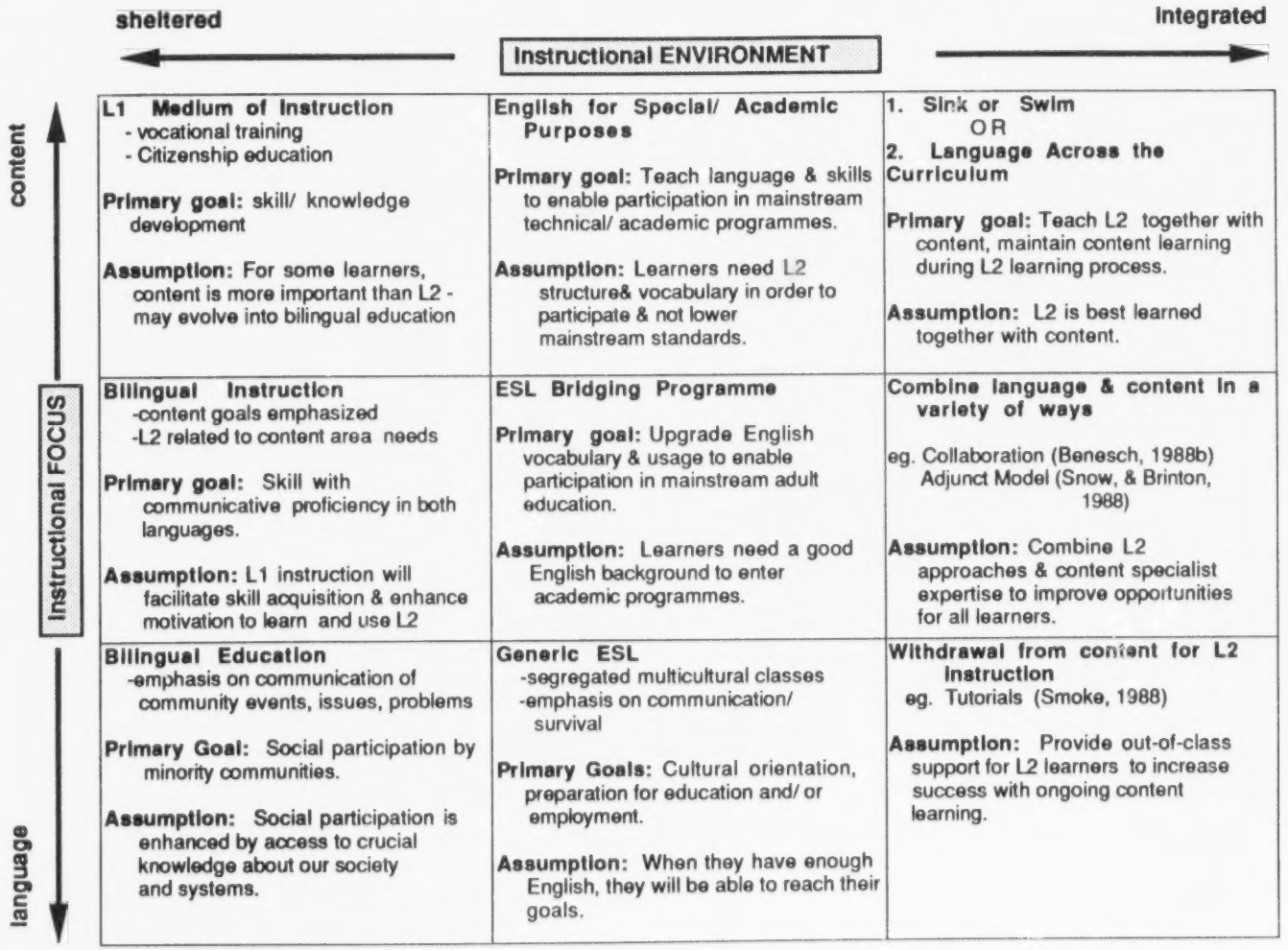
sheltered
Instructional ENVIRONMENT
Integrated
content
Instructional FOCUS
language
L1 Medium of Instruction
- vocational training
- Citizenship education
Primary goal: skill/ knowledge development
Assumption: For some learners, content is more important than L2 - may evolve into bilingual education
English for Special/ Academic Purposes
Primary goal: Teach language & skills to enable participation in mainstream technical/ academic programmes.
Assumption: Learners need L2 structure& vocabulary in order to participate & not lower mainstream standards.
1. Sink or Swim
OR
2. Language Across the Curriculum
Primary goal: Teach L2 together with content, maintain content learning during L2 learning process.
Assumption: L2 is best learned together with content.
Bilingual Instruction
-content goals emphasized
-L2 related to content area needs
Primary goal: Skill with communicative proficiency in both languages.
Assumption: L1 instruction will facilitate skill acquisition & enhance motivation to learn and use L2
ESL Bridging Programme
Primary goal: Upgrade English vocabulary & usage to enable participation in mainstream adult education.
Assumption: Learners need a good English background to enter academic programmes.
Combine language & content in a variety of ways
eg. Collaboration (Benesch, 1988b)
Adjunct Model (Snow, & Brinton, 1988)
Assumption: Combine L2 approaches & content specialist expertise to improve opportunities for all learners.
Bilingual Education
-emphasis on communication of community events, issues, problems
Primary Goal: Social participation by minority communities.
Assumption: Social participation is enhanced by access to crucial knowledge about our society and systems.
Generic ESL
-segregated multicultural classes
-emphasis on communication/ survival
Primary Goals: Cultural orientation, preparation for education and/ or employment.
Assumption: When they have enough English, they will be able to reach their goals.
Withdrawal from content for L2 instruction
eg. Tutorials (Smoke, 1988)
Assumption: Provide out-of-class support for L2 learners to increase success with ongoing content learning.

Figure 20. Approaches to Content in Multilingual Settings: A Conceptual Framework (Laura E. Ho, 1993)

training and understanding Canadian society is an acknowledgement of the personal competence and integrity of members of all communities. An individual who feels secure in his or her expression of personal competence is more likely to desire communication with other cultural groups and to sense a belonging within Canadian society.

Programmes at the integrated multicultural end of the continuum are characterized by their location within mainstream adult education. Language learners study together with native speakers in a monolingual setting with varying degrees of assistance. One possible interpretation of content focus end of the instructional dimension here is the traditional "sink or swim" approach (really a non-approach) in which the learner is left to figure out the language and the lesson for him or herself. It is curious that the "sink or swim" method occupies a similar area of the framework as the more thoughtful language across the curriculum, but this is because of their shared orientation toward integration and content. These two approaches differ dramatically along a third dimension which concerns the language awareness of the educational community.

Movement from content focus toward language focus in integrated settings should result in increased intervention by second language specialists to support effective learning. This should not be interpreted as a negative aspect of the transition but rather a way, again, to conceptualize the effect and location of various instructional strategies relative to learner goals. The tutorial system described by Linda Hirsch (1988), for example, seems a very effective way to support content area learning. It matches groups of ESL learners in content area courses with tutors who assist with the writing process and approaches to content, and allows for an ongoing series of quick lessons directly related to the language needs of the content programme. The approach selected will depend on the characteristics of the particular groups of learners (Celce-Murcia, 1989) and the characteristics and possibilities of the instructional environment.

D. A Time for Listening and Speaking

In this chapter, I have returned to the literature to begin to re-situate immigrant participation in adult education in terms of social context, looking at education in economic development terms, the problem of absence of writing about immigrants in adult education, and the problem of relating language teaching to other kinds of learning. At this point, it may seem that I have abandoned the stories and the statistical portrait which led me into this study, but that is certainly not the case. In order to understand the implications both of the stories and the statistics, it was necessary to establish a framework for listening and speaking.

'Listening and speaking' — the title of this work — was chosen because of its currency in English language teaching and because of the inherent ambiguity of its referents. Who is listening and who is speaking? In language teaching terms, listening and speaking are skills developed by learners to facilitate interaction with English speakers, prerequisites to participation in non-ESL kinds of instruction. Certainly I mean to draw upon that meaning as it pertains to immigrant experience, but I also intend the term for the reader who may have only encountered immigrants in ways which objectify them, that is, in government reports, policy documents, newspaper articles. It is my hope that the kind of presentation I have offered has appealed to your ear, encouraging you to listen to the joint and several voices who have joined me in this work. Yet a third strand of meaning concerns the dialogue I hope to open between educators of various stripes about the subject of access to education by immigrants.

I begin to work backward toward the original questions of this study by considering the parting words of the statistician in Chapter 6: How do you think that our work might inform the project of adult education in Canada? In that question, the statistician was, I think, referring not only to the individual works brought to the conversation that day, but to the understandings achieved through social intercourse. Some of the understandings were of the informational kind: exchange of research findings, increasing the professional network, understanding how different kinds of researchers think and work. These are extremely important to the understanding of the broad social implications of this problem, but they could not have been achieved without concomitant attention to the problem of getting to understanding, appreciating the differences represented in the other, wanting to understand. Chapter 6 was an exercise in listening and speaking.

Who should listen and who should speak? As I identified in the first part of this chapter, many of the issues brought up by Azar Bahman, Jan, Dave and Amy Sham are similar to issues faced by many other Canadians. Immigrants are not alone in their search for appropriate education, counselling and employment. These are issues facing all Canadians. Yet how would we know that this is the case unless we begin to listen, both to immigrants and Canadians about their experiences as learners? I have endeavoured to show, in this work, that many long held assumptions about immigrants and language learning, immigrants and education, need to be challenged if educational opportunities are to improve. At the same time, while conducting this research, I have heard more and more about the frustrations of young Canadians and their growing cynicism toward schooling. It seems that there is much listening and speaking to be done.

Chapter 8 – Directions from the Dissertation

This study began from the juxtaposition of two questions: 1) How do immigrants experience adult education? and 2) How do they imagine adult education which encourages their involvement? By employing two disparate research methods — a statistical study and a narrative study — to study the same problem, I have tried to exploit the tension between the questions and to open up a place for conversation about this problem. The metaphor of conversation was explored though an imaginary encounter between the proponents of each method, speaking together with me at my home.

Some important insights were achieved through the conversation. First, a perspective articulating the experience of a teacher or counsellor working with adult immigrants emerged. This position seems to stand astride the dialectic between statistics and stories, having a nodding familiarity with each but beginning in a place coloured by day to day events. Through the opening of this position, the tension between the statistician and the storyteller was diminished and conversation could begin. Second, to participate in the conversation, the participants needed to find a common goal which they could work toward. Simply sharing a common problem was not enough to allow them to interact. Ownership of problems by specialist groups is perhaps the greatest barrier to the imagining of distinct alternatives. Also, the project of finding a way to talk together forced us to look outward into the world for models used to broach other difficult topics. We looked at temporary structures (like contracts and conferences) as ways to highlight the possibilities of discussion without threatening the foundational beliefs of individual disciplines. Successful participation in such ventures, it was discovered, would require a conscious effort both to listen to others, and to speak about ideas together.

Still, to consider the possibility of immigrant participation in adult education in fresh ways required an understanding of the current situation (as revealed in the academic literature), a way of thinking of problems of language and content relative to the overall environment of adult education, and a way of thinking about implications of adult education within a culturally-diverse community. Chapter 7 identified a number of dynamics of the problem, including: 1) the push for change across adult education to make it more responsive to community and business interests, more relevant to the needs of learners; 2) the treatment of immigrant language needs in adult education; and the treatment of languages, generally, in

Canadian society. In response to the diffuse, but insistent effects of these dynamics, I proposed an environmental model, situating language and content goals within an instructional framework, to encourage a greater, more thoughtful variety of responses to the demonstrated needs of immigrant learners.

How does this study fit together? At this moment, I feel that I have embarked on a very long pilgrimage to understand the shape of a problem, and have sojourned along the way with people of several isolated cultures, each related to the others historically, none of them communicating. My journey is like a thread connecting these places, stitching together parts which are not normally joined: the bureaucrat and the learner, the storyteller and the statistician. Still, it is incumbent upon me to draw the whole together, to organize a retrospective, to talk about what happened, what might happen...

1. Statistical findings

What can be said about how immigrants currently experience adult education? For the population of LVA, at least, the statistical portrait has identified some very concrete things. First, we know that the vast majority of learners in the programme had been away from formal schooling for seven or more years. This finding is significant in thinking about learners' needs and expectations in coming to a learning experience, not only in a new school, but in a new country, a new language. Of particular concern is the need for educational upgrading. A very large proportion of LVA clients have twelve or fewer years of education. However, years of education may not always directly correlate with literacy competence in mother tongue. Further investigation is needed to determine the personal and employment situations of learners in this group, and to provide upgrading opportunities which match with these.

Client registrations by length of residence showed that the greatest number of registrants entered the programme within the first five years in Canada. It is of continuing concern, however, that about one hundred clients per year, or 10% of registrants, have been in Canada for up to twenty or more years. The needs of this subgroup are not widely understood since the literature of immigration has focussed largely on newcomers, usually within the first three years in Canada. More needs to be done to study long term aspects of integration and to look at the role of education in supporting adaptation within the community. Since this is not a group likely to receive information about counselling and educational assistance for immigrants, its size is likely larger than its respresentation in this study.

The most instructive analysis done as part of the statistical study concerned the relationship between development of English proficiency and length of residence

in Canada. There is a widely-held assumption in the community that English proficiency automatically improves the longer a new arrival is in the country. However, there is more likely a broad range of outcomes in terms of language proficiency, even after many years in Canada. The common practice among adult education programmers of using language proficiency requirements as a basis for screening non-Canadian born applicants may serve to discriminate against a sizeable portion of the group. Furthermore, evidence connecting the standards required by institutions with results achieved has not been produced. Since access is key to participation, more studies looking at English proficiency and learner achievement need to be undertaken to provide a basis for decision-making concerning this issue.

Related to this is the obvious need for increased opportunities for bilingual learning. If the same or a similar proportion of long term residents with low English proficiency exists in the general population, alternative approaches to language and content need to be considered for more extensive use. This study referred to the work of Derwing & Malicky (1992) and Podeschi (1990) who examined bilingual teaching with cultural groups having limited formal education (ie. Khmer and Hmong learners). Such approaches bear consideration with other groups and other goals, notably vocational education and citizenship development, where emphasis could be given to content rather than on just issues of language and adaptation. Here, I am thinking about situations, particularly among some refugee groups, where learners aspire to gain employment and support themselves, but have limited motivation (or confidence) to develop skills in English. Perhaps by providing some learners sheltered opportunities for achievement, we will also find more interest in learning English.

2. Insights from stories

a) Gaining access: Stories offer different kinds of insights about this study's questions. Both Azar Bahman and Amy Sham initially got into adult education through referrals. Neither of them was really aware of the range of opportunities which may (or may not) have existed in the community for them. Unfortunately, they got into learning situations which were either poor or poorly chosen. Can this problem be altered? Their stories show how decision-making about education can be very haphazard when learners do not receive counselling and consider what is available and what they want. That their backgrounds are so different — Azar completed some high school and Amy has an undergraduate degree — shows that lack of background knowledge about the workings of education can affect a whole range of people, not a select portion of the group.

Jan and Dave took a more proactive approach to learning. They got a lot of information from people in their own cultural communities and used those contacts to personal advantage. Jan, a psychologist by training, quickly got into a network of helping professionals and met a fellow Pole, who helped him get some contract employment. Dave, a teacher, with the help of a friend who had fairly good English skills, was able to locate, apply for and enter technical school. Still, their experiences were quite different. Jan had fairly good English, but limited success, in spite of his persistance, in getting an English course which he felt met his particular needs. He encountered systemic barriers (programme requirements and traditions) which have stifled his attempts to get into a graduate programme. Still, he continues to plan for education in his future. Dave, on the other hand, arrived with very little English, was lucky to get into a fairly reputable ESL programme and, after six months, pushed to get into and complete his Computer Technology Studies.

Each of the four stories talks about the problem of access to appropriate study and the role of counselling in supporting this goal. At the moment, however, there is inadequate educational counselling for newcomers. The government of Canada has recently sponsored a series of counselling centres in settlement agencies in major centres, but these are, for the most part, directed to language training referrals. Our system of colleges, technical schools and universities has been slow to respond to the educational needs of immigrants with counselling. Instead, their particular needs have been assumed to be largely linguistic (Ho, 1990). Little attention has been paid to their needs for information about our system of education and strategies for access. As a consequence, although immigrants do participate in adult education, they are likely to spend excessive amounts of time in ESL programmes and sometimes redundant academic upgrading.

b) Making connections: The learners in Chapter 5 spoke about the importance of making connections, both in their own country and in Canada. Of course the need for connections is not particular to immigrants. We all depend on connections for important information, for support, for opportunities. Yet consider the consequences of having the information and support networks you depend on completely disrupted. Your job title and responsibilities suddenly become meaningless to people who care little about what you did before or what you hope to do in *their* country. Imagine the situation of a person like Azar Bahman who lived and worked in Canada for more than a year before she found someone to listen to who she was, someone who could help her make sense of her existence here. How did she make that connection? By chance, she met a Canadian couple on her way home from a garage sale. They were curious why Azar and her husband were

carrying furniture over such a long distance. They were even more curious why these neighbours seemed to know so little about how to get help for themselves.

For Dave, an important connection occurred when he had already begun his studies at TECH. When he met "the old guy" in his class, he was able to reach out and share his education and experience with a fellow student, a Canadian. At the same time, he was able to improve his English and learn something about people and life in Canada. This association helped Dave experience himself as a competent person in a Canadian school. He was able to relate to his fellow student as a person. Encounters like these provide a means of substantially addressing culture in adult education for, although Dave now remembers how he helped an older student, he does not think about how he gained confidence to interact with non-Vietnamese through helping a fellow student. Similarly, the Canadian-born man learned something from Dave about encountering immigrants as individuals rather than as representatives of a particular group.

Jan talked about the problem of connections in terms of how they translate internationally. Although he was very good at making and using his connections in Poland, he found that getting into supportive networks in Canada was a serious problem for many people. He spent a lot of time searching for the right people to talk to.

> Here I know that it's a similar situation [to Poland], especially at higher levels, you know. You want up the ladder, you want to get a better job, you have to know some people. But if you come here with training and you start by getting into cleaning, it's like you put your feet into the swamp: the longer you stay there, you are deeper in the swamp. It's difficult to escape from there.

Jan was concerned about how people learn about opportunities in education and employment in Canada, so that they can make reasonable decisions for themselves.

Once again, Jan's concern is not only a problem for immigrants. Several recent economic reports (D'Cruz & Rugman, 1992; Economic Council of Canada, 1993) point to the problem of adequate linkages between individuals, education and enterprise. Canada's current economic climate is unpredictable, and unreadable by many experts. When persons born in this country are having a difficult time understanding how to make wise short term and long term career decisions, it is easy to see why immigrants would be concerned. It is a problem of human resources, generally.

Similarly, for Amy, finding connections to help with a career change after a long and successful career was a frustrating experience. She had prepared to go into business by taking a range of cooking courses at night school in Hong Kong.

Still, she had no formal entrepreneurial training and seemed to be jumping into an almost stereotypical Chinese business: the restaurant. She made some bad financial decisions and lost her business. How can we know how many other foreign investors have faced similar experiences in trying to fathom the Canadian marketplace? Can they make the connections they need to minimize the risks of failure and to establish a meaningful, contributing business?

c) Considering the wholeness of experience: All too often, immigrants' experience and education in their own countries are overlooked in favour of their "Canadian" experience. I chose to present the Canadian experience of four people as situated within the larger space of their lives to illustrate problems in the continuity of experience, and to recognize the competence newcomers bring to their decision-making in Canada.

I gave Azar Bahman a book with the four stories and asked her to read them, in preparation for meeting with the other participants in the study. I knew that she would have a difficult time reading some of the text, so I called her and asked how she was doing. She told me she had been taking her book to work and reading it during her break times. She would ask Canadian friends to help her to read. Before long, the Canadian friends were asking if they could borrow the book to read it, too. It seemed that all they had ever heard about immigrants was from the media. They thought that immigrants were given a lot of unnecessary government assistance and, in many cases, had more help than Canadians. After reading the stories, these people became very interested in four immigrants as people. They began to ask Azar if she had met Dave, and if she knew how he was doing. They wanted to meet Amy Sham and Jan. They had never thought to ask Azar about her own life before coming to Canada.

Yet how is this same experience treated in education? For most immigrants, education primarily means ESL classes, where they are segregated from Canadians (except for their teacher who is almost always a native English speaker), focussing on functional language skills — language to do something. Schools, which could provide a focus for sharing experience, negotiating ideas and aspirations, have been organized to accomplish the reverse: to emphasize the present and future (problems and goals), the acceptance of the status quo.

d) Relevance: The problem of relevance is, of course, related to acknowledging the wholeness of experience. Jan looked for an English course which would address his needs for reading and writing and ended up in a class which focussed on oral skills. Dave entered the Academic Upgrading programme at TECH, even though he had a degree in Physics from Vietnam. Azar, who could not read or write in English, sat in a class looking at a newspaper for five months. Amy Sham

registered for course after course, hoping she would find something for herself in one of them. Each person hoped to relate their own experience to a learning opportunity in Canada.

While two of them complained about the problems, the others did not. These people were quite willing to accept what happened to them as their fortune. They would never ask for alternatives. It would be presumptuous.

Instead, they see that immigrants must struggle to find a place in the existing scheme of things. They expect nothing in return except a chance for a quiet life.

The variety of responses to the problem of relevance illustrates how difficult it is to address. Although Azar Bahman complained about her experience, nothing was done to affect the programme. Jan simply quit his class and went to work. Dave worked at learning the English to talk about concepts he already understood. Amy Sham moved on to another course. There is no identifiable group reaction relating to relevance. Learners respond in a variety of ways.

e) The desire for community: What does it mean to come to a new country and try to make a place for yourself? A continuous element of all of the stories is the desire to belong somewhere, to have a place to be. That is the goal of their struggle. Again, it seems that community is a struggle for many of us as the shape of the world we once knew changes. Inhabiting places and systems which themselves have become alien in their treatment of people are many today who question their own situation in the world. Does this mean that immigrant needs for community are the same as for Canadian-born?

In some ways, indeed, the immigrant's search for a new home is mirrored in the Canadian-born person's search for meaning in their old home. We are, all of us, new to a time which challenges with technology, with economic shifts, with ecological disaster, with cultural movement. It would seem a reasonable time to learn about each other as a way to reduce uncertainty, to affirm the meaning of people to each other.

f) Talking about English: Throughout my work with the stories, I thought about each person's experience with English, about the place of learning English in their lives. As an English teacher myself, I have been known to be guilty of the conceit that English is a wonderful language and that immigrants want to and should learn it if they are to live here. The people in the stories, however, have quite different views. It is not that they do not want to learn English, it is the meaning that learning English has for each of them. Amy Sham, for example, speaks quite good English. Yet she had specific problems in dealing with the telephone and with special job language that wasn't taken up as part of her clerical training. She could

not do that job because of her lack of skill. Her goals are no longer stated in terms of opportunities for communication but in acquiring more English:

> At night I shall study conversation. And also maybe I attend the TOEFL course. And then I try to get better marks in TOEFL. Then I think I go back to university.

For Amy Sham, English has started to become a commodity rather than a means of interacting with people in other cultural groups.

Jan speaks about English as a means to an end. In order to gain the education and employment that he wants, he needs more English. He is not expressly interested speaking perfect English, moreso in being able to compete with Canadians:

> If an employer likes my background and experience, he will not consider my English as a barrier, of course. But if he or she wants to find an excuse not to hire me, it's very easy. Because you know not many people, landed immigrants, have an English level like Canadians. I would like some training help in professional English.

Jan is interested in other people and has many friends in a variety of cultural groups. He is happy to use English in his daily life. His desire to improve relates to his competitiveness.

Azar Bahman wanted to learn English so that she could read and write, get a job and meet Canadians. Unfortunately, her first efforts at learning were thwarted by programmers more interested in collecting government dollars than responding to learner needs. She learned very little in her five months at Provincial College. She persisted and met people who helped her improve her literacy skills and gain some work experience. Still, Azar Bahman struggles with print information in English. Much of her news is gained second hand or from television news. This woman, who is a poet and an activist now says that she feels:

> Sad, very sad. I feel not happy. I'm very quiet now, you know. Inside my body is very sad because I don't..... I can't say anything and I can't talk. Most of the time I feel like learning English is like being in jail.

Azar is content to be in Canada and to be safe. She is happy to have English-speaking friends. Yet she longs for the ability to participate in the flow of events — gossip and political discussions — as she no longer can. Her communicative world is circumscribed by her ability in this new language.

All in all, the stories speak about English as a means to an end. It is not a magical acquisition which will enable people to participate more actively. It is not a panacea for cultural difficulties between Canadian-born and immigrants. Most of the immigrants I have spoken with are practical people. They want to learn English

so that they can do something else. Their linguistic goals are tied up with other projects. For some, like Azar Bahman, learning English is a long term project. Perhaps she will never markedly improve her fractured grammar. Her life and her contributions in Canada are nonetheless valuable. She is much admired by her friends and co-workers. For others, like Jan and Amy Sham, there will be a lot of learning on the job. Life goes on.

3. Returning to the Questions

The findings of this study may be limited to the experience of the clients of the LVA, although I suspect that much of what I have found is applicable to immigrant learners in all parts of Canada. The tension between the two questions -

How do immigrants experience adult education?

and

How do they imagine adult education which allows/encourages their involvement?

has led me to pursue multiple kinds of information and to try to bring the respective images into alignment. The relationship between the profiles is complementary, allowing some perhaps more dynamic observations of the situation than any single methodology could afford. What can be said?

a) How do immigrants experience adult education?

1. Because the majority of learners in the database scored only in the high basic range in English (2 -3), we can infer that they qualify only for ESL or special ESL vocational programming. At the same time, a similar range of educational needs exists as can be expected in the general population (given the span of age, educational background, language proficiency, gender and interests of the LVA population). In this way, many immigrants are disqualified from non-ESL learning opportunies.
2. Immigrants experience considerable frustration in gaining access to meaningful educational opportunities. That approximately one thousand people per year seek educational information in a settlement agency means that most mainstream institutions are not offering needed information or assistance that is accessible or welcoming to immigrants. In addition to the statistical focus on this problem, each of the stories is instructive of particular problems with counselling, recognition of learner background, and systemic barriers (such as favouring traditional routes for programme entry).
3. The largest number of people in the database had from nine to twelve years of education. Academic Upgrading and vocational education (including Apprenticeship training) would be primary goals for many in this group.

4. For those with credentials from their home country, finding a way to bring qualifications into line with Canadian expectations is a problem. There is a lot of variety in international preparation of trades and professional people. Educational bridges for these people often do not exist and complete retraining must be undertaken (Government of Alberta, 1992, pp.xix).

b) How do immigrants imagine adult education which allows/encourages their involvement?

1. From the four people who shared their stories, it is clear that educational goals are primary, not English. These learners did not speak critically of Canadian adult education except that access was a problem. In order to accommodate both educational and language learning agendas, schools would need to engage with the complexity of language and content rather than choosing to defer to more convenient indicators such as the TOEFL, MELAB and CANTEST. Even among learners who have met entrance score requirements, language often continues to be a difficulty. Given the number of immigrants in our communities, language support *within programme* should be examined as a way of combining language and content learning. More research into the effectiveness of such strategies, however, is needed.
2. The size of the group that learns only minimal English is considerable, making up at least 10% of registrations in LVA. These individuals often experience difficulty gaining well-paying employment as well as keeping in touch with information and events in their community. Bilingual vocational and sheltered mother tongue programmes deserve greater consideration for addressing the needs of this group. Such changes do not have to be expensive. Most immigrating communities include teachers and other professionals in their midst. Job opportunities for immigrating teachers have been rare indeed.
3. The participants in the stories suggested that Canadians need to learn more about the experience of immigrants. They felt that Canadians only hear about immigrants taking jobs or belonging to violent gangs. These people proposed that there be more opportunities for contact between immigrants and Canadians to encourage mutual appreciation and acceptance.
4. There are particular learning needs among certain groups. Among those arriving in the business immigration class, for example, not enough has been done to assist newcomers with adaptation. There is an assumption that everyone knows how to do business already, and that those with money need no settlement assistance. From the experience of Amy Sham, it seems that more needs to be done to provide community orientation and perhaps mentoring for some new

business people. Bilingual Chinese/English support would encourage participation while allowing discussion of information such as Canadian employment practices or meetings with government officials.

Rethinking Listening and Speaking: Time for Dialogue, not Skill

In spite of my best intentions, it is possible that some will understand the implications of this dissertation to suggest that change is a matter of making repairs to our current system of education, of fixing up or adjusting. That is the difficulty with doing a study and offering recommendations. Once they are released, they assume a life of their own. For some, my position will only be seen as countering another, a difference of quantity. Certainly this study has implications for some quantifiable adjustments to adult education, but I hope that it has also introduced the reader to some of the more human dimensions of the problem, especially the relationships between the life world of adult immigrants/the life world of decision-makers/the life world of teachers. The distance between the kinds of experience reported here and the possibilities which have been outlined, however, suggests implications for the shape of adult education, generally.

Implications of the Dissertation

When Clifford Sifton, the Minister of the Interior at the turn of the twentieth century, initiated Canada's first great wave of immigration, he could not have imagined the implications of bringing together in one country peoples from so many origins. Doubtless, he planned for quick Canadianization of the diverse groups who arrived, but it was clear that he had a sense of how he thought newcomers would participate in building the country. Canada wanted people to occupy the broad expanse of the west, to work its land, to increase its population. Immigration and immigrants were integral to the success of this plan.

Almost one hundred years after the introduction of Sifton's plan, immigration to Canada has again been raised to record levels, this time with overt government goals of population stabilization, economic development and humanitarian assistance. In the intervening decades since Sifton's time, however, Canada has changed radically from a largely agrarian society to one which is dominated by urban life. The nature of work, as well, has changed. No longer can large numbers of newcomers aspire to find a place in society by selling their physical labour to farmers or to labour-intensive factories. Most jobs today are either in service industries which require no training (fast food service, dishwashing, janitorial work, car washing, etc.), offer no opportunities for advancement and pay less than a living wage or, increasingly, they require a high degree of training

together with a sophisticated background knowledge of systems and appropriate ways of interacting. In exchange, such jobs generally provide access to a better quality of life and opportunities for individual advancement. These are also the jobs which are most difficult to get.

Aside from the very big issue of employment and technology is the central question of what kind of Canada is being created, by whom and for whom? In Clifford Sifton's time, and even up to the time following World War 2, it seemed enough to offer newcomers land or factory jobs and to assume their quick assimilation to "the Canadian way" of doing things. At that time, Canada had a high demand for physical labour, and immigrants could quite easily find places to establish themselves, even if they weren't always suitable to their backgrounds.

But Canada has changed, and the world has changed. The focus of political discourse has shifted from "independence" (rugged individualism) to "interdependence" (ingenuity and flexibility) as we begin to recognize the interrelatedness of economic, political, environmental and social objectives. Industries have often been at the leading edge of this change because the links between their ways of operating and the impact on the world are tangible and direct. If a community's water is being polluted, citizens will fight. If stores do not appeal to the the interests and needs of real people, they will go out of business. Even though most people can point to an industry which has not responded to community demands, though, how many have even considered the implications of less tangible, more insidious institutional and governmental practices, practices aimed at fostering social and economic development, supporting "the arts", underpinning social stability? Here I refer to practices such as recognizing particular groups as "the business community", practices which lead to preferential treatment of traditional Euro-centred arts, and practices for accessing information and education which have the effect of excluding persons by virtue of their lack of knowledge of the system. Jan's story, in Chapter 5, offers an example of such a practice. Because he did not have the "usual" North American background expected of applicants for graduate studies in a particular university department, he was eligible to apply, but was very unlikely ever to be accepted by that programme.

Yet how can such practices be readily identified and critiqued? From within the "system", they appear to many people as straightforward, egalitarian and thoughtful responses to society as a whole. This is especially so in education, as illustrated by widespread use of terms such as "public education", "public institutions", and "community programmes". Unlike the industrial scenario described earlier, there is no tangible focus for examining societal outcomes in terms of who has been included/excluded by education, what programmes have

been included/excluded, what goals have been deemed priorities, and by whom? In fact, with so many levels of decision-making involved in the provision and outcomes of education, especially as it relates to the participation of adult immigrants (immigration is federal; education is provincial; in adult education, curriculum is institutional; entrance policies are institutional; student funding can be federal or provincial; etc.) it becomes frustrating for most people to understand where responsibility for any particular decision lies.

Both by design and outcomes, this dissertation study of clients of an immigrant counselling programme in Edmonton has implications which will require further investigation. By situating the study outside the traditional borders of adult education, the problem of where education legitimately begins and ends becomes readily apparent. Beyond the kind of study I have undertaken, however, other types of critiques have begun to appear from outside traditional education circles. Groups such as the Economic Council of Canada (1992) and business management experts (eg. d'Cruz & Rugman, 1992) have begun to address the relevance of education from an economic (employer, investor) perspective. From a more personal perspective, researchers such as Horsman (1990) and Neilsen (1989) look at literacy from the experience of individuals. This dissertation, by its situation beyond the traditional borders of education, permits a particular focus on the response of education to the needs of an identifiable group: I have asked how education has responded to immigrant experience.

This study, like those mentioned above, has implications for a view of education which recognizes the centrality of human interdependence in the process of change. I have endeavoured to explore how adult education could become more inclusive of the large number of immigrants whose potential contributions are now neglected and discounted in the mainstream of adult education. Although immigrants may be selected for certain skills before coming to Canada, what are our schools doing to ensure that these same individuals can qualify for opportunities once they arrive here? In addition to technical skills, however, I have also tried to expand upon narrow, traditional notions of skill by highlighting the cultural and adaptation experiences immigrants bring to this country.

This work responds to concerns of thoughtful mainstream educators about how immigrants might best be accommodated. In addition to offering a critique of current efforts, I have proposed a strategy for engaging with issues of language and content within educational contexts, as an alternative to the rigid and exclusionary use of language proficiency requirements. If implemented, the model I have proposed would result a broader variety of teachers, learners and content within schools. Its intended goal is to bring adult immigrant education within the

boundaries of established programmes, minimizing the need for exlusively language-focussed ESL classes.

As shown in Chapter 7, the interaction between social cohesion and economic development in a culturally-diverse Canada is not a simple one. Canadians cannot simply mimic the strategies of more culturally homogenous countries, like Germany and Japan, and expect the same kind of results. Education in Canada must challenge, rather than merely transmit, notions of who Canadians are in order to develop social cohesion. Such a statement has broad implications for the study of a whole range of subjects, from literature to history to science where what has been included/excluded from the curriculum continues to raise issues of identity only among some minority learners. As illustrated in the story of Grace, in Chapter 2, however, that cultural majority students have their assumptions unchallenged by many current educational programmes may, in fact, be more of a problem relative to overall goals for change.

The pressures which face humanity at the end of the twentieth century are immense, but the need for imagination is greater. In a democratic society, issues such as the environment, technology, social and political change belong to all citizens, not a particular group. In a culturally-diverse democratic society, such as Canada's, the shape of the body politic itself must become curriculum as we struggle for ways to acknowledge the differences among us (Mouffe, 1988). Canada cannot be considered a progressive nation if we encourage the immigration of large numbers of people without conceptualizing, in an inclusive way ("we" and "they" together as "we"), the impact of such change on all our systems, including adult education. Language cannot be treated as a prerequisite to joining the Canadian club. Until now, meaningful curricular issues have been obscured by our national preoccupation with difference in language. This unyielding position has affected the possibility of participation and the sharing of our collective wealth of skills and talents.

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Appendix 1 – Language and Vocational Assessment Service Client Intake Form

Office Use/or/Known ID
Client Id: _____

Catholic Social Services
Client Application
Immigration & Settlement Service

*Service with Agency Before : ☐ Yes ☐ No _____ Year

*Application Date: ___ _____ ___ dd mmm yy

Settlement Counselling Only

Your Family Reference Number: _____

Service : IMM - Immigration & Settlement Serv

Location : _____

Intake Worker ID: _____

Surname: _____

Accepted for Service ☐ Yes ☐ No

Section B: Client Base Data

*Name: _____ Surname

_____ Additional Surnames

_____ First Name Initial

Mailing Address _____ Street Apt. #

_____ City Province Postal Code

Telephones: (403)-___-_____ Home _____ Contact Name

(403)-___-_____ Business _____ Contact Name

Health Care Number: _____

Gender ____ M/F Age: _____ Date Of Birth ___ - dd m

Number of Clients Potentially Involved: _____

Emergency Address _____ Street

_____ City Province Postal Co

Telephone No. ( ) ____-_____

Emergency Address _____

_____ City Province Postal Co

Telephone No. ( ) ____-_____

*Ethnic Background

- ☐ AFGH - Afghani
- ☐ CANA - Canadian
- ☐ CHIL - Chilean
- ☐ CHIN - Chinese
- ☐ CZEC - Czech
- ☐ ETHI - Ethiopian
- ☐ GUAT - Guatemalan
- ☐ HUNG - Hungarian
- ☐ INDI - Indian
- ☐ IRAN - Iranian
- ☐ IRAQ - Iraqi
- ☐ Ot - Other _____
- ☐ KHME - Khmer
- ☐ LAOS - Laos
- ☐ NICA - Nicaraguan
- ☐ PAKS - Pakistani
- ☐ POLI - Polish
- ☐ PORT - Portuguese
- ☐ ROMA - Romanian
- ☐ SALV - Salvadorian
- ☐ SOMA - Somalia
- ☐ VIET - Vietnamese

*Country of Birth:

- ☐ AFGH - Afghanistan
- ☐ CANA - Canada
- ☐ CHIL - Chile
- ☐ CHIN - China
- ☐ CZEC - Czechoslovakia
- ☐ ETHI - Ethiopia
- ☐ GUAT - Guatemala
- ☐ HUNG - Hungary
- ☐ INDI - Indian
- ☐ IRAN - Iran
- ☐ IRAQ - Iraq
- ☐ Ot - Other _____
- ☐ KAMP - Kampuchea
- ☐ LAOS - Laos
- ☐ NICA - Nicaragua
- ☐ MALA - Malaysia
- ☐ POLA - Poland
- ☐ LEBA - Lebanon
- ☐ ROMA - Rumania
- ☐ ELSA - El Salvador
- ☐ SOMA - Somalia
- ☐ VIET - Vietnam

Section C: Referral Source

*Referral Source (tick one below)

- ☐ G02 - Alberta Social Services
- ☐ EX7 - Alberta Vocational Centre
- ☐ CSS5 - CSS - Community Service
- ☐ CSS2 - CSS - Children & Youth Service
- ☐ CSS3 - CSS - Family Service
- ☐ CSS1 - CSS - Immigrasn & Settlement
- ☐ CSS4 - CSS - Rehabilitation Service
- ☐ G56 - Camrose Lutheran College
- ☐ G52 - Canada Employment & Immig. Comm.
- ☐ G50 - Canada Employment Centre
- ☐ G51 - Canada Immigration Centre
- ☐ G34 - Catholic School
- ☐ G53 - Community Health/Mental Health
- ☐ G32 - Other E.S.L. Institution
- ☐ G07 - Edmonton Social Services
- ☐ G06 - Employer
- ☐ G31 - Ethno-cultural Association
- ☐ G54 - Family & Community Support Services
- ☐ G27 - Other Federal Government Dept.
- ☐ CSS9 - CSS-St.Vincent de Paul
- ☐ G35 - Other Immigrant Settlement Agency
- ☐ G11 - Lawyer
- ☐ G33 - Health Clinic, Local board of Health
- ☐ G81 - Workers Compensation
- ☐ G82 - Alberta Career Centre
- ☐ G60 - Women's Shelter
- ☐ G28 - Municipal Government Dept
- ☐ G03 - Police
- ☐ G37 - Private Agency/Other Social Agency
- ☐ G12 - Private Health Clinic/Physician
- ☐ G29 - Other Prov Govt Dept
- ☐ G14 - Psychiatrist
- ☐ G13 - Psychologist
- ☐ G36 - Public School
- ☐ G55 - Red Deer College
- ☐ G57 - Religious Institution
- ☐ G18 - Self
- ☐ G15 - Social Worker
- ☐ G09 - Hospital
- ☐ G410 - Previous Client
- ☐ G411 - Other Education Ins
- ☐ G99 - Other _____

If Self Referral Media Source:

- ☐ 1 TV
- ☐ 2 Radio
- ☐ 3 Bus Poster
- ☐ 4 Friend/ Relative
- ☐ 5 Counsellor
- ☐ 6 Church/Bulletin
- ☐ 7 Brochure/Pamph
- ☐ 8 Other

Office Use/or/Known ID
Client Id: _____

Catholic Social Services
Client Application
Immigration & Settlement Service

Section C: (continue)

***Referral Source Reason:** (1=Primary, 2=Secondary, 3=Tertiary)

- ☐ 40 - Educational Concern
- ☐ 60 - Employment
- ☐ G04 - Family Violence
- ☐ G03 - Family Concerns
- ☐ G05 - Financial Concerns
- ☐ P08 - Health Concerns
- ☐ P09 - Housing
- ☐ P10 - Immigration
- ☐ P12 - Legal/Police
- ☐ P13 - Language
- ☐ P16 - General Information
- ☐ P14 - Initial Settlement
- ☐ G99 - Other _____

Section D: Non-Acceptance: (Complete only if Client NOT accepted for Service)

Reason for Non-Acceptance: (tick only one)

- ☐ 1 - Request Service not Available
- ☐ 2 - Referred to more appropriate Service
- ☐ 3 - Service Delayed
- ☐ 99 - Other _____

Non Acceptance Referral to: (tick as required)

- ☐ G02 - Alberta Social Services
- ☐ EX7 - Alberta Vocational Centre
- ☐ CSS5 - CSS - Community Service
- ☐ CSS2 - CSS - Children & Youth Service
- ☐ CSS3 - CSS - Family Service
- ☐ CSS1 - CSS - Immigration & Settlement
- ☐ CSS4 - CSS - Rehabilitation Service
- ☐ G56 - Camrose Lutheran College
- ☐ G52 - Canada Employment & Immig. Comm
- ☐ G50 - Canada Employment Centre
- ☐ G51 - Canada Immigration Centre
- ☐ G34 - Catholic School
- ☐ G53 - Community Health/Mental Health
- ☐ G32 - Other E.S.L. Institution
- ☐ G07 - Edmonton Social Services
- ☐ G06 - Employer
- ☐ G31 - Ethno-cultural Association
- ☐ G54 - Family & Community Support Services
- ☐ G27 - Other Federal Government Dept.
- ☐ CSS9 - CSS-St.Vincent de Paul
- ☐ G99 - Other _____
- ☐ G35 - Other Immigrant Settlement Agency
- ☐ G11 - Lawyer
- ☐ G33 - Health Clinic, Local board of Health
- ☐ G81 - Workers Compensation
- ☐ G82 - Alberta Career Centre
- ☐ G60 - Women's Shelter
- ☐ G28 - Municipal Government Dept
- ☐ G03 - Police
- ☐ G37 - Private Agency/Other Social Agency
- ☐ G12 - Private Health Clinic/Physician
- ☐ G26 - Other Prov Govt Dept
- ☐ G14 - Psychiatrist
- ☐ G13 - Psychologist
- ☐ G36 - Public School
- ☐ G55 - Red Deer College
- ☐ G57 - Religious Institution
- ☐ G18 - Self
- ☐ G15 - Social Worker
- ☐ G09 - Hospital
- ☐ G410 - Previous Client
- ☐ G411 - Other Education Ins

Client Id: _____
Client Surname: _____

Catholic Social Services
Client Application
Immigration & Settlement Service - LVA ASSESSMENT PROGRAM ONLY

Page
Intake Worker Id: _____
Worker Surname: _____

Section J:

*** Source of Income:**

- ☐ AAP - Adjustment Assistance Program
- ☐ AISH - Assured Income/Severely Handicap
- ☐ E - Employment
- ☐ INS - Insurance
- ☐ P - Pension
- ☐ SA - Social Assistance Program
- ☐ TA - Training
- ☐ UIC - Unemployment Insurance
- ☐ WCB - Workers Compensation
- ☐ NSI - No Source of Income
- ☐ SLG - Student Loans/Grants
- ☐ OT - Other

***Marital Status:**

- ☐ 1 - Married
- ☐ 2 - Common Law
- ☐ 3 - Divorced
- ☐ 4 - Separated
- ☐ 5 - Widow
- ☐ 7 - Single

*Social Insurance Number: _____ _____ _____

*Arrival in Canada: ___ ___ ___ = _____
DD MMM YY Total Months

*Arrival in Alberta: ___ ___ ___ = _____
DD MMM YY Total Months

***Immigration Category:**

- ☐ A - AC/CR1
- ☐ B - DC/CR2
- ☐ C - DC/CR3
- ☐ D - DC/CR4
- ☐ E - DC/CR5
- ☐ F - DC/CR6
- ☐ G - FC/AR
- ☐ H - Independent
- ☐ J - Retired
- ☐ K - Self Employed
- ☐ L - Minister's Report
- ☐ M - Visa - Tourist
- ☐ N - Canadian Citizen
- ☐ O - Refugee Claimant
- ☐ P - Unknown
- ☐ Q - Other
- ☐ R - Extended Minister Permit
- ☐ S - Visitor Record
- ☐ T - Visa - Student
- ☐ U - Employment Authorize./Foreign
- ☐ V - Employment Authorize./Domestic
- ☐ W - Student Authorization
- ☐ X - Positive Determination Letter

*Canadian Citizen: ☐ Yes ☐ No

*Place of Birth _____ * _____
Town/City Country

First Languages: *1) _____ *2) _____ *3) _____
Mother Tongue

Family: Relatives In Edmonton ☐ Yes ☐ No Relatives In Canada ☐ Yes ☐ No

Spouse _____ School _____ Working _____ Unemployed _____ Home _____

Children _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ = Total Members in Household _____
Number Ages of Children

Medical Information: _____

* Work Experience

	Home Country - Occupation (if none, enter 3311)	How Long	Canada - Occupation (if none, enter 3311)	How Long
Main	* 1.		*1.	
	2.		2.	
	3.		3.	

***Employment Status**

- ☐ FT - Full Time
- ☐ PT - Part Time
- ☐ HM - Home Maker
- ☐ UN - Unemployed
- ☐ S - Student
- ☐ D - Disabled
- ☐ R - Retired
- ☐ OT - Other

Present Job: _____ How Long: _____

Priority: Work _____ Study: _____ Other: _____

Other Info: (Intended Occupation/Future Goal) _____

Supervisor Signature _____ Initials _____ Date Entered ___ ___ ___

Catholic Social Services
Client Application
Immigration & Settlement Service - LVA ASSESSMENT PROGRAM ONLY

Client Id: _____ Intake Worker Id: _____ Pag
Client Surname: _____ Worker Surname: _____

Education: _____ *Last Class Code ☐ A - 1 year or less ☐ B - 1 - 3 years ☐ C - 4-6 years ag ☐ D - Over 7 year

*School: (No. of Years) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 (13 or more Years)

*Technical/Vocational: 1 2 3 4 5 6 (6 or more years) *Diploma/Certificate ☐ Yes ☐ No

*University/College: 1 2 3 4 5 6 (6 or more years) *Diploma/Certificate ☐ Yes ☐ No

Other _____

*Total Years Education: _____

Certificate/Diploma : _____

Other Courses/Programs: _____

English: *Did you study English before coming to Canada: ☐ Yes ☐ No
*Did you study English in Canada: ☐ Yes ☐ No

*Financial Assistance Needed? ☐ Yes ☐ No Current financial Status: _____

Previous English Courses:

	Completed Attended Date	Presently Enroled	* Length of Course (Weeks)	* Hours per Week	* Sponsored By	* Institution
# 1						
# 2						
# 3						

Sponsored by Codings

DASS - Alberta Social Services
CEC - Canada Employment Centre
AVT - Alberta Vocational Training
SELF - Self Sponsored
STLO - Student Loan
COMP - Company/Employer
PB - Part-Time Bursary
G07 - Edmonton Social Services
OT - Other

Institution Codings

NOIN - No Institution
VIC - Victoria Composite High School
STCA - St. Catherine's
BD - Bonnie Doon Composite High School
ANNE - ANNEX
AVC - Alberta Vocational Centre
UofA - University of Alberta
SACR - Sacred Heart
GMCC - Grant MacEwan Community College
OT - Other Agency _____

Last Course: (When) _____ = (Months Ago) _____

Main reason for learning English: _____

ESL course Preference: ☐ Full Time ☐ Part Time

Additional Comments: _____

Section K: Program Admission - (Data Entry: Enter Following Information on AMSGF010) (Must be filled out by WORKER)

Location : _____ *Admission Date: ____ ____ ____
Program : LVA - Language and Vocational dd mmm yy

Assigned Workers:

*1. Worker Id: _____ 2. Worker Id: _____
Worker Surname: _____ Worker Surname: _____

Supervisor Signature _____ Initials _____ Date Entered ____ __ _ ___

Client Id: _____
Client Surname: _____

Catholic Social Services
Immigration & Settlement Service - Application
Language & Vocational Assessment - Intake

Pag

*Intake Worker Id: _____
*Worker Surname: _____

*Assessment Date: ___ ___ ___
dd mmm yy *E.S.L. Evaluation:

	Non English	Basic		Intermediate		Advanced
Rating Value =	0	1	2	3	4	5
Listening						
Speaking						
Pronunciation						
Reading						
Writing						
Grammar						

*Overall English Proficiency Level:

- ☐ 0 - No English
- ☐ 1 - Basic
- ☐ 2 - Basic
- ☐ 3 - Intermediate
- ☐ 4 - Intermediate
- ☐ 5 - Advanced

*First Language Assessment:

- ☐ 0 - No Skills
- ☐ 1 - Basic
- ☐ 2 - Intermediate
- ☐ 3 - Advanced

_____
_____
_____

*Referral Appropriate: ☐ Yes ☐ No

*Financial Assistance: ☐ Yes ☐ No

*Referrals: (Data Entry: Please enter on Outside Referral Form)
Referred To: FT - Full Time PT - Part Time

1. _____ _____
2. _____ _____
3. _____ _____

Office Use Only
Date Entry
1) Translate Referral in
proper Code
2) Referral Reason = P1
3) Referral Date =
Assessment Date

Other Indicators: (Interests, Aptitudes, Experience)

a) _____
b) _____
c) _____

Career Directions : _____

Comments: _____
_____
_____

Follow-up Date: ___ ___ ___
dd mmm yy

Supervisor Signature _____ Initials _____ Date Entered ___ ___ ___

Section L: Collateral Information

Canada Employment Centre Counsellor _____ Telephone: _____

Canada Immigration Centre Officer _____ Telephone: _____

Alberta Social Services Social Worker _____ Telephone: _____

Employer _____ Telephone: _____

Doctor _____ Telephone: _____

Volunteer _____ Telephone: _____

Other _____ Telephone: _____

Catholic Social Services

Immigration & Settlement Service - Application
Language & Vocational Assessment - Three Week Follow-Up

¶ Client Id: _____
¶ Client Surname: _____

¶ Intake Worker Id: _____
¶ Worker Surname: _____

Page

Follow-Up Date: ____ ____ ____
dd mmm yy

*E.S.L. Course Referral ☐ Yes ☐ No

*Institution: (tick only one)

- ☐ ACC1 - Alberta College - ESL
- ☐ ACC2 - Alberta College - Post Secondary
- ☐ ACC3 - Alberta College - Upgrading
- ☐ ALEX - Alex Tailor - ESL
- ☐ EPS2 - Bonnie Doon - ESL
- ☐ CHAN - Changing Together
- ☐ CHIN - Chinese Community Services
- ☐ COLL - College Referrals
- ☐ COMM - Community League Programs
- ☐ EPS1 - Cont. Education Centre - Anex - ESL
- ☐ ESC1 - ECS - Sacred Heart
- ☐ EISA - EISA - ESL
- ☐ EPS4 - EPSB - Vic Comp - Upgrading
- ☐ EPS3 - EPSB - Vic Comp - ESL
- ☐ ESC2 - ESC - St. Catherine - ESL
- ☐ ESC5 - ESC - St. Francis Xavier - ESL
- ☐ ESC3 - ESC - St. Hilda - ESL
- ☐ ESC4 - St. Timothy - ESL
- ☐ ESL - ESL Tudor Bank
- ☐ FC01 - Fairview College - ESL Training
- ☐ FC02 - Fairview college - Vocational Training
- ☐ GMC1 - GMCC - ESL
- ☐ GMC3 - GMCC - Post Secondary
- ☐ GMC2 - GMCC - Upgrading
- ☐ INDO - Indo - Canadian Women's Association
- ☐ LAZ - Laser - ESL
- ☐ MENN - Mennonite Centre - ESL
- ☐ NAI2 - NAIT Post Secondary
- ☐ NAI1 - NAIT Pre Tech
- ☐ OT2 - Other Secondary Institutions
- ☐ OT1 - Other Settlement Agencies
- ☐ OT - Other Settlement Agencies - ESL
- ☐ SSS1 - Salvadoran Social Services - ESL
- ☐ STU1 - Student volunteer Service U of A - ESL
- ☐ UFA1 - U of A - ESL
- ☐ UFA2 - U of A - Other
- ☐ OT - Other _____

*Duration: _____ (Weeks)

*Duration: _____ (Hours per Week)

*Other Referrals:

- ☐ HS - High School
- ☐ PSA - Post Secondary Academic
- ☐ PSV - Post Secondary Vocational
- ☐ APPR - Apprenticeship
- ☐ EMPL - Employment Business/Search
- ☐ CAPL - Career Planning
- ☐ COUN - Counselling
- ☐ OT - Other Specify _____

*Financial Assistance Needed:

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Supervisor Signature _____ Initials _____ Date Entered ____ ____ ____

Client Id: _____
Client Surname: _____

Catholic Social Services
Immigration & Settlement Service - Application
Language & Vocational Assessment - Three Week Follow-Up

Intake Worker Id: _____
Worker Surname: _____

Page

Follow-Up Date: ___ ___ ___
dd mmm yy

*Sponsor Type: (tick only one)

- ☐ SOCA - Social Assistance
- ☐ CEC - Canada Employment Centre
- ☐ AVT - Alberta Vocational Training
- ☐ PB - Part Time Bursary
- ☐ NOSP - No Sponsor
- ☐ SELF - Self Sponsored
- ☐ STLO - Student Loan
- ☐ COMP - Company
- ☐ OT - Other _____

*Financial Assistance Obtained

a) If YES _____ SAME AS REFERRAL
_____ Other

PENDING _____

b) If NO (reason) _____ - _____
_____ - _____
_____ - _____
_____ - _____
_____ - _____
_____ - _____
_____ - _____

*Enroled in ESL Program: ☐ Yes ☐ No

If YES: _____ Same as Referral

_____ Other Institution

*If NO, (reason)

- ☐ LOFA - Lack of Financial Assistance
- ☐ POEW - Program Over - Enroled - Waiting
- ☐ FAP - Financial Assistance Pending
- ☐ _____ - Other _____

POST - ENROLMENT:

*Presently Enroled

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

If NO (reason) _____

_____

_____

COMMENTS: _____

_____

_____

Supervisor Signature _____ Initials _____ Date Entered ___ ___ ___

CATHOLIC SOCIAL SERVICES
Client Closure
IMMIGRATION & SETTLEMENT SERVICE

LOCATION - _____
PROGRAM - _____

Client ID : _____
Client Surname : _____

Worker Number : _____
Worker Surname : _____

Closure Date : ___ ___ ___
dd mmm yy

SECTION A: Closure Summary

***Reason for Closure** (tick one only)

- ☐ 01 - Program/Service Completed
- ☐ 30 - Client Terminated Service
- ☐ 99 - Other _____
- ☐ 40 - Staff Terminated Service
- ☐ 3F - Client Moved/Relocated

***Closure Referral:**(tick as required)

- ☐ G53 - Alberta community Health
- ☐ G02 - Alberta Social Services
- ☐ EX7 - Alberta vocational Centre
- ☐ CSS6 - CSS - Substance Abuse
- ☐ CSS5 - CSS - Community Service
- ☐ CSS2 - CSS - Childrens Treatment
- ☐ CSS3 - CSS - Family Service
- ☐ CSS4 - CSS - Rehabilitation Service
- ☐ G56 - Camrose Lutheran College
- ☐ G52 - Canada Employment & Immig. Comm
- ☐ G50 - Canada Imployment Centre
- ☐ G51 - Canada Immigration Centre
- ☐ G34 - Catholic School
- ☐ G48 - Dentist
- ☐ G32 - E.S.L. Institution
- ☐ G07 - Edmonton Social Services
- ☐ G25 - Education Institution
- ☐ G31 - Ethno - Cultural Association
- ☐ G99 - Other _____
- ☐ G54 - Family & Community Support Services
- ☐ G27 - Federal Government Dept.
- ☐ G09 - Hospital
- ☐ G35 - Immigrant Settlement Agency
- ☐ G30 - Immigrant Women's Centre
- ☐ G11 - Lawyer
- ☐ G33 - Health Clinic, Local Board of Health
- ☐ G28 - Municipal Government Dept.
- ☐ G37 - Other Social Agency
- ☐ G03 - Police
- ☐ G12 - Private Health Clinic/Physician
- ☐ G26 - Provincial Government Dept.
- ☐ G14 - Psychiatrist
- ☐ G13 - Psychologist
- ☐ G36 - Public School
- ☐ G55 - Red Deer College]
- ☐ G57 - Religious Institution (Church,Temple)
- ☐ G59 - Single Men's Hostel
- ☐ CSS9 - CSS - St.Vincent de Paul
- ☐ G60 - Woman's Shelter

SECTION B: Follow-up Services Planned

*Follow - Up Services Codes	Duration Code	Worker Id	Worker Surname
9 - Telephone			
12 - Written Evaluation Planned			
15 - Interview			
99 - Other _____			

Duration Codes
1 - Within 3 weeks
13 - Within 3 months
14 - 3 months or more
99 - Other

Supervisor Signature _____ Initials _____ Date Entered ___ ___ ___

Program : _____
Client Id: _____
Client Surname _____

Catholic Social Services
Outside Referrals
Immigration & Settlement Service

Fa:

EDM -Er

Section I: Outside Referrals (data entry enter data via form Outside Referrals)

- G53 - Alberta Community Health/Mental Health
- G02 - Alberta Social Services
- EX7 - Alberta Vocational Centre
- CSS6 - CSS - Substance Abuse
- CSS5 - CSS - Community Services
- CSS2 - CSS - Children Treatment
- CSS3 - CSS - Family Service
- CSS4 - CSS - Rehabilitation Service
- G56 - Camrose Lutheran College
- G52 - Canada Employment & Immigration Comm
- G50 - Canada Employment Centre
- G51 - Canada Immigration Centre
- G34 - Catholic School
- G48 - Dentist
- G32 - ESL Institution
- G07 - Edmonton Social Services
- G25 - Educational Institution
- G31 - Ethno Cultural Association
- CSS9 - CSS - St.Vincent de Paul
- G58 - Food Bank
- G84 - Other Second Hand Store
- CSSA - CSS - Immigration -Settlemnt Counselling
- CSSB - CSS - Immigration - LVA
- G99 - Other _____

- G54 - Family & Community Support Service
- G27 - Federal Government Dept
- G09 - Hospital
- G35 - Immigration & Settlement Agency
- G30 - Immigrant Women s Centre
- G11 - Lawyer
- G33 - Local Board of Health/Health Clinic
- G28 - Municipal Government Dept
- G37 - Other Social Agency
- G03 - Police
- G12 - Private Health Centre/Physician
- G26 - Provincial Government
- G14 - Psychiatrist
- G13 - Psychologist
- G36 - Public School
- G55 - Red Deer College
- G57 - Religious Institution (Church/Temple)
- G59 - Single Men s Hostel
- G81 - Workmen s Compensation Board
- G60 - Women s Shelter

Referral Reason

- 40 - Education
- 60 - Employmen
- G04 - Family Viole
- G03 - Family/Perso
- G05 - Financial
- P08 - Health
- P09 - Housing
- P10 - Immigration
- P12 - Legal/Police
- P13 - Language
- P14 - Initial Settlem
- P16 - General Info
- P17 - Consumer
- P18 - Documentat
- P19 - Citizenship
- 70 - Other

Worker ID Number Surname	Referral Date	Referral To (enter code from above)	Referral Reason (Enter code from above)	(Data Entry Only)
Id: _____ _____	___ ___ ___ dd mmm yy			___ ___ ___ ___ dd mmm yy Init
Id: _____ _____	___ ___ ___ dd mmm yy			___ ___ ___ ___ dd mmm yy Init
Id: _____ _____	___ ___ ___ dd mmm yy			___ ___ ___ ___ dd mmm yy Init
Id: _____ _____	___ ___ ___ dd mmm yy			___ ___ ___ ___ dd mmm yy Init
Id: _____ _____	___ ___ ___ dd mmm yy			___ ___ ___ ___ dd mmm yy Init
Id: _____ _____	___ ___ ___ dd mmm yy			___ ___ ___ ___ dd mmm yy Init
Id: _____ _____	___ ___ ___ dd mmm yy			___ ___ ___ ___ dd mmm yy Init
Id: _____ _____	___ ___ ___ dd mmm yy			___ ___ ___ ___ dd mmm yy Init

Appendix 2 – Language and Vocational Assessment Service Mother Tongue Assessment Rating Scale

Mother tongue proficiency is rated by examining the client's reading and writing abilities in their own language. Assessment is done by a counsellor fluent in the client's language, and is rated holistically, according to grade equivalencies in their own country.

Rating	Grade Equivalent
0	Grades 0 - 2
1	Grades 3 - 4
2	Grades 5 - 6
3	Grades 7 - 9
4	Grades 10 - 12
5	Post secondary

Appendix 3 - Language and Vocational Assessment Service Five Point Scale for Assessment of English Proficiency

(adapted from Alberta Vocational College, Calgary "The Five Point Grading System")

Speaking fluency

0 No fluency

1 Has difficulty making him/herself understood.
Uses isolated words accompanied by gestures.
Uses few verbs or uses verbs with no attention to time so that it is difficult to know if he is referring to the past, present or future.
Often confuses basic vocabulary (eg. son and daughter).
Has a very small vocabulary.
Knows some question words.

2 Can express simple ideas but not usually in good grammatical form. However, he/she does express him/herself in sentences. Despite some problems understanding him or her due to incorrect use of verbs, he/she has more control than an individual rated 1, and is much more likely to include verbs in an utterance and will usually give some indication of time, even if grammatically incorrect. (eg. He was go.).
Can ask simple questions.
Can carry on a basic conversation, if he has enough confidence.

3 Can express ideas fairly well.
Expresses himself/herself in statements.
Verb forms are generally appropriate with respect to time.
Knows a fair amount of vocabulary.
Can use a few basic idioms, but generally does not express him/herself in idiomatic English.
Is not familiar with many synonyms for vocabulary he knows, or the nuances of words.

4 Expresses complex ideas well. Demonstrates varied vocabulary.
Knows many synonyms and has some feeling for nuances of the language.
Able to use and understand many idioms.
Fairly correct grammatically, but likely still has problems with articles and/or word order — problems that persist for a long time and do not usually interfere with getting ideas across.
Can explain clearly about his or her job goal or a skill that he or she has developed.

5 Can express complex ideas well, without hesitation or misunderstanding.
Is able to express him/herself almost as a native speaker of English due to a broad knowledge of idioms and familiarity with colloquial expressions.
Makes relatively few grammatical errors, although some typical second language errors may persist (eg. incorrect use of articles, tense errors).
Demonstrates extensive vocabulary, and knowledge of some specialized vocabulary.

Listening Comprehension

0 No or very little comprehension.

1 Understands simple commands when spoken slowly.

Can understand basic personal questions when spoken slowly, in a familiar format (eg. When did you come to Canada? but not When did you arrive here?)

May have difficulty understanding familiar questions if spoken by an unfamiliar person.

Will be able to pick out familiar vocabulary (eg. food, clothing, shopping, medical vocabulary) from an utterance, but may not understand the meaning of even a simple statement that is not completely familiar to him or her.

May misundersand due to confusion of familiar but similar words (eg. kitchen/chicken).

2 Understands basic commands when spoken fairly slowly.

If spoken by a familiar person, he or she will understand the utterance spoken at a near-normal rate.

Will understand basic personal questions, usually even if spoken in a form he or she is unfamiliar with.

Will understand a simple conversation with little need for explanatory gestures or use of objectsf or clarification.

3 Understands commands, personal questions and simple conversations spoken at near-normal rate, even by unfamiliar speakers.

Understands the gist of many conversations, regardless of topic.

Has a good understanding of many topics spoken fairly quickly, as long as he or she can rely on familiar vocabulary and expressions.

4 Understands the gist of most conversations, even if the speaker is unfamiliar, speaking at a normal rate, not explaining or re-phrasing much, and not using props or gestures.

Understands the gist of many news items on television and radio.

5 Has immediate understanding of most conversations, as in 4, and is able to participate actively without hesitation.

Has a good understanding of news items on TV or radio.

Is able to follow conversations that are heavily colloquial since his or her vocabulary , knowledge of idioms and experience with rapid speech are good.

There may still be gaps relating to unfamiliar vocabulary or structure, but he or she will compensate by asking questions to support comprehension.

Pronunciation

0 No English.

1 Is extremely difficult to comprehend.

2 Can be comprehended with moderate difficulty, but has little mastery of sound and rhythm patterns.

3 Produces sounds which are adequate for comprehensibilty.

4 Employs English intonation, rhythm and some sound patterns. Has only a slight accent.

5 Has almost flawless intonation, rhythm and sound production.

Reading

0 No or very little reading comprehension in English.

1 Can understand frequently seen signs (ie. traffic, no smoking).
Can read very simple sentences and words that can be sounded out (would likely have difficulty with words like 'cough', for example).
Cannot connect words well.

2 Can read short passages specially written in easy English.
Can understand basic vocabulary found on application and other types of forms.
Relies heavily on translating word for word.

3 Can read passages with complex sentences but not extensive vocabulary.
Can understand a straightforward letter, form or instruction.
Is able to get the meaning from context at times, but generally still relies on the dictionary.
Has some success at getting the main idea of a short passage, but this is hindered by lack of vocabulary and lack of familiarity with more complex grammatical structures.

4 Can derive meaning from context quite well.
Able to use inferential skills to help determine meaning.
Able to pick out the main idea of a passage quite well.
Can paraphrase an article from a newspaper or manual quite well.
Able to understand most correspondence and forms.

5 Can read and understand most adult unsimplified texts (eg. newspapers, magazines), but will have some difficulty reading longer fiction, especially literature from another period
(eg. Shakespeare, Milton)
Does not rely on dictionary for meaning. Able to derive meaning from context in many instances.
Well-developed vocabulary and familiarity with range of complex structures facilitate comprehension of many unsimplified texts.

Writing

0 No or very little writing in English.

1 Can write his or her name, address and phone number plus other basic items that have been learned by rote.

Demonstrates difficulty with handwriting (relating to unfamiliarity with the Roman alphabet or with literacy skills generally). Typical problems relate to forming of letters and confusion between letters.

Copies with difficulty.

2 Can write simple sentences from dictation.

Will probably omit unstressed sounds when writing (eg. 'He writing' instead of 'He's writing'.).

Problems with spelling.

Can compose simple sentences using the SUBJECT - VERB - OBJECT pattern.

Struggles with word order, use of articles, word choice, etc.

3 Demonstrates more vocabulary and variety of structure in writing, although word order, punctuation and grammar remain difficult.

May attempt to use structures and vocabulary beyond his or her present level of control.

4 Is able to combine a variety of sentences into a unified paragraph.

Uses a number of conjunctions to join ideas and makes writing more interesting by using a variety of adjectives and nouns.

Able to make use of transition words (eg. then, next, because).

More extensively developed vocabulary and sentence structure enable more interesting topics and style in writing.

Demonstrates fair control of vocabulary and sentence structure in composition. Generally comprehensible.

Can take good notes.

5 Able to compose a piece of coherent writing demonstrating some knowledge of conventions of written style.

Few major grammatical errors.

Able to write letters and prepare a resume.

Appendix 4 – Language and Vocational Assessment Service Occupational Codes

IMM A01	ACCOUNTANT
IMM G01	ADMINISTRATOR
IMM A02	ARCHITECT
IMM I01	ARMY/ARMED FORCES
IMM A03	ARTIST
IMM G02	ASST MANAGER
IMM B01	AUTO BODY REPAIR
IMM B36	AUTO MECHANIC
IMM C01	BABY SITTER
IMM B44	BAKER
IMM B09	BARBER
IMM B02	BOILERMAKER
IMM B45	BRICKLAYER
IMM B03	BUILDING MAINTENANCE
IMM A04	BUSINESS SUPERVISOR
IMM 4	BUSINESS/SALES
IMM B04	CARPENTER
IMM A23	CLERGY
IMM 5	CLERICAL/SECRETARIAL
IMM A05	COMPUTER PROFESSIONAL
IMM B05	CONSTRUCTION
IMM B46	COOK
IMM A06	COUNSELLOR
IMM C04	CUSTODIAL/HOUSEKEEPING
IMM C03	DAYCARE WORKER
IMM A24	DENTIST
IMM A07	DOCTOR
IMM B06	DRAFTSMAN
IMM B07	ELECTRICAL TECHNICIAN
IMM B08	ELECTRICAL REPAIR
IMM A08	ENGINEER
IMM D01	ENTERTAINER
IMM B10	FACTORY WORKER
IMM B11	FARM WORKER
IMM A09	FASHION DESIGNER
IMM B53	FISHERMAN
IMM B12	GARDENER
IMM B42	GASFITTER
IMM A10	GOVT. ADMINISTRATION
IMM B29	HAIR STYLIST/BEAUTICIAN
IMM B13	HEAVY DUTY MECHANIC
IMM 3	HOMEMAKER
IMM B14	INDUSTRIAL REPAIR
IMM B15	JANITORIAL
IMM A11	LAB TECHNICIAN
IMM 12	LABOURER
IMM A12	LANGUAGE TEACHER
IMM B17	LARGE APPLIANCE REPAIR

IMM A13	LAWYER
IMM B18	MACHINE OPERATOR
IMM B19	MACHINE REPAIR
IMM B20	MACHINIST
IMM B21	MAINTENANCE
IMM A14	MANAGER
IMM A15	MANAGERIAL
IMM B22	MECHANIC
IMM B23	MECHANICAL REPAIR
IMM B24	MILLWRIGHT
IMM B25	MINER
IMM C02	NANNY
IMM X01	NO OCCUPATION
IMM A16	NURSE
IMM B38	NURSES AIDE
IMM 11	OTHER
IMM B47	PAINTER/DECORATOR
IMM A17	PHARMACIST
IMM B37	PILOT
IMM B26	PLANTATION
IMM B27	PLUMBER
IMM B51	POLICE
IMM B48	PRINTER/GRAPHICS
IMM A18	PROFESSIONAL SUPERVISOR
IMM A19	PROFESSOR
IMM B28	RAILROAD WORKER
IMM B30	ROAD WORKER
IMM B39	SEAMSTRESS
IMM B52	SECURITY GUARD
IMM B33	SELF EMPLOYED
IMM B31	SHIPPER
IMM B41	SMALL APPLIANCE REPAIR
IMM B32	STEAM ENGINEER
IMM B43	STEAMFITTER/PIPEFITTER
IMM 6	STUDENT
IMM I00	SUPPORT
IMM A20	SURGEON
IMM B40	TAILOR
IMM A21	TEACHER
IMM H00	TEACHING
IMM B34	VEHICLE OPERATOR
IMM A22	VETERINARY
IMM B49	WAITER
IMM B50	WAITRESS
IMM B35	WELDER